1578/2962.

# IMPRIMATUR

*Hic liber vere Christianus; qui, si Primævam spectes Pietatem, Summam Eloquentiam, Rationum pondus, nihil in eo deest quo minus possit nos Omnes, quales tam accurate describit, vere Christianos efficere. Puriori ævo sane dignissimus est, nisi quod tam potens sit, qui vel nostrum Sæculum transformaret in melius. Benedicat Deus Operi & Authori.*

THO. TOMKYNS,
R.Rmo. in Christo Patri ac Domino Dno. *GILBERTO* Divina Providentia Archiepiscopo Cantuariensi à Sacris Domesticis.

# THE CAUSES OF THE Decay of Christian Piety.

OR AN
IMPARTIAL SURVEY
Of the Ruins of
*CHRISTIAN RELIGION*,
Undermin'd by Unchristian Practice.

*Written by the Author of*
*THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN.*




*LONDON*,
Printed by *J. H.* for *E.* and *R. Pawlet*, at the Sign of the Bible in *Chancery-Lane* near *Fleetstreet*, 1704.

B L

# TO THE
# *BOOKSELLER.*

*SIR,*

HAVING in my hands a *Practical* Treatiſe concerning *The Cauſes of the Decay of Chriſtian Piety* ſo viſible in this our Age; written by the Excellent *Author* of The *WHOLE DUTY OF MAN:* and having obtain'd permiſſion to make it publick, I was in ſome doubt whether the preſent diſturb'd ſtate of affairs, would not make it reaſonable to delay the Edition: but conſidering that times of difficulty and trouble bring thoughts of Vertue into their minds, who forgot their Duty and their God in affluence and quiet: I am apt to think a Diſcourſe of this kind ſeaſonable enough at this time.——

Almighty God give you ſome repair for your * late great Calamity: As it was the *Author*'s kindneſs that you ſhould have the offer of this Tract, whatever it prove, ſo I think it will be a little the more ſeaſonable, that it comes as a New-years Gift, *&c.*

* *The late Fire in* London.

*Your very loving Friend,*

*January,* 1667.

H. E.

# THE PREFACE.

*THOUGH this be the first appearance this Tract has made in the world, yet its Being is of somewhat a more ancient date; it having received its lineaments and perfect form some years since: when the Author not having partiality enough to think it worthy publick view; had judg'd it, if not to perpetual darkness, yet at least to a long indefinite suspension from seeing light. In this interval, 'tis more than probable some passages may have lost much of their propriety to the present state of affairs, they having been adapted to circumstances which may since have received some change: and herein I must bespeak the Reader's candor, to make such allowances as the matter shall require; of which yet I suppose there will not occur very many, or very important occasions.*

*BUT would God I were to Apologize for a yet far greater absurdity, that our scene were so shifted, that the whole design of the ensuing discourse might become one intire impertinence, and that our more eminent conformity to the rules of our Christian institution, might supersede these disquisitions above our failances and aberrations. But alas, I find I have pitcht upon a subject not like to be out-dated; vice daily gaining not only strength but impudence: nay,*

*we*

*we are not only become witneſſes againſt our ſelves by declaring our Sin as* Sodom, *but we have forced God alſo to atteſt againſt us by puniſhing us in a manner no leſs conſpicuous and manifeſt. And ſurely then 'tis more than time for us to take the Prophet's advice,* Hag. 1. 7. to conſider our ways, *to reflect not only on thoſe robuſt gyant-like provocations which have thus bid defiance to Heaven; but alſo to ſift out thoſe ſecret incendiaries that have inflamed us to this mad daring; to examine what that* חמר, *that inflamable* bitumen, *the untemper'd mortar, is with which we build our* Babel, *by diſcovering thoſe miſperſwaſions and falſe confidences, wherein many of our other guilts are founded: in order to which this ſlight Tract offers its feeble, yet well-meant aids: being forced out of its retirement, and like* Crœſus *his dumb Son, compell'd to ſpeak by impulſe of the preſent exigent: and how deſpicable ſoever the Mite contributed be in it ſelf, yet if it may provoke the more wealthy to caſt in richer gifts, it may prove no unprofitable agent for the* Corban. *'Tis evident this is a ſeaſon which not only warrants, but exacts the moſt importunate endeavours of perſwading men to thoſe things that belong to their Peace.*

*FOR although 'tis true, That every ſtate of ſin ſets us alſo in a ſtate of hoſtility with God, yet our preſent condition ſeems to have advanced us beyond the common degrees even of that. 'Tis, we know, high inſolence againſt a Prince to deſpiſe and violate his laws, but when to that are ſuperadded contumelies, and deſign'd affronts to his perſon, this is ſuch an accumulated outrage, as will vanquiſh the moſt reſolv'd*

*reſolv'd* Patience. *And this alas appears to be our caſe: we have long indulg'd to our ſelves the breach of all Divine Laws, gratified every appetite, every paſſion and luſt with the forfeiture of our Allegiance; and as if this would not ſerve to render us irreconcileable enough to God, we are now grown to ſubjoyn malice to licentiouſneſs; project not ſo much to pleaſe our ſelves, as to diſpleaſe Him; profeſs a contempt not only of His Commands, but Himſelf; and ſeek no leſs to dethrone Him, than abrogate thoſe. Thus have we made it a kind of perſonal quarrel, and by thoſe impious blaſphemies we daily dart againſt Heaven, do, as it were, dare the Divine Majeſty to vindicate it ſelf. Whether his great longanimity may have given our* Hectors *a fancy, that they had vapour'd God (as they are uſed to do Men) into a tameneſs, I ſhall not examine: but his late proceedings with us ſufficiently teſtifie that he means no longer to decline our Challenge. He now appears to avow the enmity as openly as we have done; and has already given us competent eſſays,* how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, *Heb.* 10. 31.

'*TIS true indeed that he has formerly own'd his controverſie with our Land, and by a long ſeries of great and heavy Calamities atteſted himſelf the* God to whom vengeance belongeth, *Pſal.* 94. 1. *Yet as great Monarchs uſe to quell leſſer inſurrections by their Lieutenants, and ſubordinate Officers; but when the Rebellion grows high and deſperate, then to encounter it in their own perſons; ſo is it here obſervable that God then Chaſtiſed, and tried to*

*reduce us by inferior instruments, found us out* Lictors *among our selves, and made one man's sin the punishment of anothers: but now as if he had the same jealousie for his honour, which* Joab *had at the Siege of* Rabba *for* David's, 2 Sam. 12. 28. *as if he feared to be reveal'd in the glory of our ruin, he takes us into his own hand, marks us out, as he did* Pharaoh, *to be the Trophies of his own peculiar vengeance, appearing signally against us in all the dreadful solemnities of an enraged Enemy.*

FOR *first, has he not, as* Moses *speaks,* Deut. 32. 41. *whet his glittering* Sword? *Nay, has he not moreover (in the Scripture stile) made it drunk with blood? by sweeping away multitudes of us in a raging* PESTILENCE, *which marcht from one part of the Nation to another in a kind of Triumphant Progress, as if it had receiv'd the same mandate God gave* Abraham, *Genesis* 13. 17. Arise, walk through the land, in the length thereof, and in the breadth thereof, for unto thee will I give it. *Whether it may not thus fatally complete its course, notwithstanding the halt it seems to make, and pass from our* Dan *to our* Beersheba, *is a question that can with no probability be resolv'd in the Negative; for as 'tis not to be doubted but there were in* Judæa *as great sinners as those on whom the Tower of* Siloam *fell,* Luke 13. *that those who have hitherto escaped have an equal share in the provoking cause of the Judgment: So also that great* Unsensibleness *many of us shew of what others groan under, is a very ominous abode; it being not only a dangerous symptome, but a probable means of*

*drawing*

*drawing that calamity to our ſelves. When God ſees we will ſuffer nothing by way of conſent and ſympathy with others, 'tis but equal we have our part in a more direct and immediate infliction, and feel what we would not compaſſionate.* Thucydides *ſerions it as the effect of the great Plague at* Plutarch *he took it, that it had extinguiſh'd humanity; brought* μεν τὸς δε *d of ferity and barbarouſneſs among them, ren-*the Tarent *em openly villanous to men, and blaſphemous* em. *God;* θεῶν φοβῳ. ἢ ἀνθρώπων νόμῳ. ὑδεὶς *there was no reſtraint of law or religion,* ation *one ain't being deſperate upon proſpect of their danger, the other preſumptuous upon the contemplation of their Eſcape; and ſure if we look impartially, ours will appear to have had ſomewhat of the ſame operation. Thoſe compaſſions which the novelty it ſeems at firſt gave us to ſufferers in this kind, ſeems now quite extinct; ſo unconcerned are we grown to every thing that touches us not in our individuals, as if we owned no relation to the* ſpecies *of mankind, though backt alſo with that cloſer tye, which the ſpiritual conſanguinity has ſuperadded. A pregnant indication of this may, I doubt not, be collected (as from many other circumſtances, ſo particularly) from the great haſte has in many places been made, to lay aſide thoſe publick* Humiliations *and Interceſſions which were recommended to us, as well by the command of Authority, as the common diſtreſs; but have been caſt off without the ſubſtraction of either of thoſe motives. Whether we are duly* mindful of the afflictions of Joſeph, *that cannot afford one day in a month for a*

*ſolemn reflection on them, I muſt leave to every man's conſcience to diſcuſs. But ſure we are no leſs wanting to our ſelves than them in this neglect; the office being no leſs deſigned for Antidote than cure, to prevent the judgment where it is not, than to remove it where it is: and if we will neither deprecate on our own behalfs, nor intercede on others; we are improvident, as uncharitable, and may juſtly the fatal event of both.*

*IN the interim, although the preſent reſp[ite] deſtruction, and our own deceitful hearts flat[ter] and ſay Peace, Peace; we have all reaſon [to] conclude that God is not atoned, the quarrel and hoſtility goes on, and his* hand is ſtretched out ſtill, *Eſ.* 5. 25. *And ſo indeed we find it in other diſmal events. Slaughter we know is not the only effect of War; which as it deſtroys the lives of many, blaſts the Supports and Joys of more. This conſequence of hoſtility we find well expreſt by the Prophet,* Joel 2. 3. The land is as the Garden of *Eden* before them, and behind them a deſolate wilderneſs, *and herein alſo hath the Lord of Hoſts, the great God of battel ſhewed himſelf mighty againſt us, he has invaded us not only with Sword, but* FIRE: *and in ſo ſtupendious manner deſolated the glory of our Land, that no humane fury could have procured, or even have wiſht the like vaſtation and ruines.* That City which was great among the Nations, and Princeſs among the Provinces, *Lam.* 1. 1. lies buried in her own Aſhes, *and is both Funeral-pile and Urn to her ſelf; and what neither foreign nor domeſtick enemies could in a ſucceſſion of many*

*ages*

*ages effect, one blast of the breath of his displeasure,* Psal. 18. *has performed in a moment. So verifying even in a literal sence the Apostle's affirmation,* Heb. 12. 29. that our God is a consuming Fire. Plutarch *tells us when* Fabius *sack'd* Tarentum, *he took not away their Images, but said,* ἀπολείπομεν τὸς θεὸς Ταραντίνοις κεχολωμένους, Let us leave the *Tarentines* their Gods that are offended with them. *'Tis our Calamity to be signally under the indignation of our incensed God, which in that great Captain's Judgment was somewhat more dreadful than the worst inflictions of War: For what industry soever has been used to entitle either the negligence or designs of men unto our overthrow, yet sure never any judgment had more legible marks of Gods immediate hand, such as shew he meant to revenge the abuse of his former gentle methods, that those who would not be reformed by the slighter corrections wherein he dallied with them, might find a* Judgment worthy of God, *Wisd.* 12. 26. *And sure such was this, which both for its greatness and irresistableness does well own its Author, and shews his wrath was accended to a very excessive heat, that thus poured out it self not only like, but in* Fire, Lam. 2. 4.

I SHALL *not here assume the Politician's part, and weigh the detriment we have sustained by it in our civil interest, of which perhaps nothing but time and experience can give us a full estimate; it rather suits my design to observe what relates to our spiritual concerns, whilst God's* dwelling-places *were involv'd in the same ruin with ours; his own peculiar*

portion not exempted, but as the Prophet complains, Ef. 64. 11. Our holy and beautiful houſes where our fathers praiſed him are burnt with fire: *This, though perhaps leaſt conſidered, is ſure not the leaſt ſad circumſtance, had only the ſcenes of our luxury, or our fraud been deſtroyed, it might have ſent us with more fervency to the places of our devotion, and we might have frequented God's houſes the better, for being deſtitute of our own: but when theſe alſo are made parts of the common heap; 'tis a ſad teſtimonial that our very Religion was provoking; That that pageant like piety which we depoſited in our* CHURCHES, *only to make a ſhew with on holy days, ſerved only to defile thoſe holy places, and render them ſo polluted as required no ſlighter purgation than that of* FIRE. *'Tis, we know, not long, ſince thoſe manſions ſacred, to the Prince of Peace, were even in the vulgar obvious ſenſe, made magazines for War; but yet more ſo in reference to that Pulpit-wild fire, which ſet the Nation in combuſtion; whether that ſtrange Fire which ſome of our* Nadab's *and* Abihu's *introduced there, may not, (even at this diſtance) have done its part to the drawing down this* FIRE *from Heaven, I leave to their ſerious reflection. But neither the* Hypocrite *nor the* Seditious *muſt ingroſs the guilt of this ruine: the* Atheiſt *vyes with both; for alas, what ſhould God do with Temples among thoſe who pay him no worſhip? Or why ſhould he let thoſe ſacred monuments remain among them, to whom all memorials of him ſerve but as occaſions, and incentives to blaſpheme him? They have long*

*ſaid*

*ſaid with thoſe in* Job, Depart from us, for we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways; *and now 'tis but equitable* (*I had almoſt ſaid* Civil) *to take them at their word, and no longer reſide among thoſe who ſo avowedly diſclaim him.*

*AND this, 'tis much to be feared, may be the portent of this diſmal vaſtation: we know men uſe not to deface thoſe houſes, where they intend to inhabit: and ſure* this abhorring his Sanctuary, *and* caſting off his Altar, Lam. 2. *is a dreadful ſign, that he means no longer to continue his reſidence among us: indeed we find in Scripture that his promiſe of cohabiting is always limited to thoſe who own themſelves his people? and therefore when ſo many of us have openly renounced that relation, we can with no juſtice expect the bleſſing appendant to it.*

*BUT perhaps this will ſeem to ſuch no formidable thing; God ſo withdrawing of himſelf is but agreeable to their wiſhes, a kind of quitting the field to them, and ſo rather matter of complacency than regret: but 'tis to be conſidered that there is another preſence of God that will infallibly ſucceed this; when he removes that of his grace, 'tis to make way for that of his anger; like the* Philiſtines *we ſhall know the God of* Iſrael *is among us by his Plagues,* 1 Sam. 5. *or to make a yet more dreadful compariſon, we ſhall, like the damned in Hell, diſcern his preſence only in the punitive effects of it, and read his nearneſs in our ſufferings. And ſure this will be but an ill exchange, even to the profaneſt of us, thoſe that have moſt deſpiſed or loathed the*

*ſoft breathings of his Word and Spirit; will find it yet harder to endure the Whirlwinds of his wrath, which will ſnatch from us thoſe ſecular advantages, for whoſe purſuit we have neglected* the better part, Luke 10. 42. *and leave us as little of worldly enjoyments, as we deſired to have of ſpiritual.*

*OF this our late Calamicies have given us a ſad* Præludium, *and God knows how ſoon we may ſee the laſt Scene of the fatal Tragedy, it being too probable that this is God's laſt Experiment upon us, like the Cauſticks and Scarifyings to a Lethargick Patient; if this bring us not to ſence, we are like to ſleep on to deſtruction: And alas, what uncomfortable ſymptomes appear even in this point alſo! Who is there that (unleſs awakened by his perſonal concernments) ſeems at all to ſtartle at the noiſe of publick ruine? When God in diſpleaſure threatned the* Iſraelites *that he would remit their Conduct to his* Angel, *and not go himſelf with them. The Text ſays,* They mourned and no Man put on his Ornaments on him, *Exod.* 33. 4. *or as the* LXX, κατεπένθησεν ὁ λαὸς πενθικοῖς· *and the Syriack,* ܘܐܬܒܙܙܘ ܥܡܐ ܠܒܘܫܐ ܕܒܘܟܝܐ ܘܠܐ ܫܕܪ ܐܢܫ ܠܒܘܫܗ ܥܠܘܗܝ; They ſtript themſelves of their Armour, their ruſling garb of War, and appeared in the penitential dreſs of Sackcloth and Aſhes: *But now that we are given up not to a conducting but deſtroying Angel, what ſigns of remorſe do we ſhew? What vanity (I fear I may ask what vice) have we ſubſtracted, upon the ſenſe of God's anger? What nicety in cloaths or diet have we cut off in ſympathy with the nakedneſs and hunger of our afflicted Brethren? Nay, do not the unreaſonable*

*Follities*

*Follities of too many among us, look as if we triumpht in their miſeries, found Muſick in the diſcordant ſounds of their groans, and our own laughter; and emulated that infamous barbarity of* Nero, *who played while* Rome *burned? 'Tis mentioned by the Prophet as a moſt prepoſterous thing, a kind of impious Soleciſm to revel under the menaces of Judgments.* Thus ſaith the Lord, a Sword, a Sword, it is ſharpned to make a ſore ſlaughter, it is furbiſhed that it may glitter, *ſhould we then make mirth?* Ezek. 21. 9. 10. *and certainly it leſs befits us againſt whom God has not only prepared, but uſed his Sword; who are not only under the threats, but actual Execution of his vengeance: And what is it but interpretatively to prompt him to yet ſharper inflictions, by ſhewing him that theſe have not edge enough to penetrate us? With how much indignation God reſents this perverſe, this contumelious behaviour we may read,* Eſay 22. 12, 13, 14. In that day did the Lord call to weeping and mourning, and to baldneſs, and to girding with ſackcloth, and behold joy and gladneſs, ſlaying Oxen, and killing Sheep, eating Fleſh and drinking Wine; eating and drinking for to morrow we ſhall die: *Upon which follows that ſevere denunciation:* Surely this iniquity ſhall not be purged from you till you dye. *Of ſo deep a tincture is this guilt, that 'tis as laſting as our lives, and like the fretting* Leproſie *in the houſe,* Levit. 14. 45. *can be removed by nothing but its diſſolution.*

*O then let us not add this to the heap of our other provocations, miſtake Impudence or Deſperation for courage;*

*courage; and frantickly defie that omnipotence which we are ſure we cannot reſiſt: but ſince it has pleaſed God even in wrath to remember mercy, let us tranſcribe his Copy, be as kind to our ſelves as he has been to us, and ſtop in our career as he has done in his; not ſo madly affect a full parallel with* Sodom *and* Gomorrha, *as to force him to deſtroy that remnant,* Eſ. 1. 9. *which alone diſtinguiſhes our caſe: but rather take pattern from* Nineveh; *cry, and* cry mightily to God, *joyn humiliation to our prayers, and reformation to both. And could we be perſuaded to do this with the ſame ſincerity, and univerſality, we might hope it may be with the ſame ſucceſs alſo: would every one who has contributed to the accending, as induſtriouſly contribute to the appeaſing of God's wrath: would all who have brought their fire-brands, bring alſo their Tears to quench them; as there would be no dry Eyes in the Nation at the preſent, ſo might it prevent as great a Generality of weeping ones for the future; ſecure us ſuch a tranquility here, as may calmly convoy us to that impaſſible ſtate,* where all tears ſhall be wiped from our eyes, where there ſhall be no more death, nor ſorrow, nor crying, nor pain, *Rev.* 21. 4.

THE

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**The Whole Duty of Man,**

AND

**The Gentlemans Calling:**

*Written by the ſame Author, both ſold by* E. *and* R. Pawlet, *at the Sign of the* Bible *in* Chancery-Lane, *near* Fleet-ſtreet.

# CHAP. I.

## *The Character of Christian Religion, demonstrating its aptitude to plant exemplary Virtue and Sanctity.*

THE holy *Psalmist* gives it as part of the Character of Pious persons, and therewithal a description of their *felicity*, *Psal.* 92. 13. *That they shall bring forth more fruit in their Age*: and what he thus observes of the members disjunctively and apart, reason suggests to be in a higher and more eminent manner appliable to the whole body united? And it being as well the mark as duty of every single Christian *to grow in grace*, 2 *Pet.* 3. 18. we may by all rules of proportion conclude, that the collective mass of such, the whole Church is by this time near *attained to the measure of the Stature of the fulness of Christ*, *Eph.* 4. 3. And indeed this is so regular an inference, that whilst the premisses stand firm 'tis impossible to shake the conclusion, the entire body must necessarily augment answerably to the growth of its several parts. And if we should so far let loose to speculation as to forget our Experience, if we measure the effect only by the power and energy of the cause, we should surely be as far from doubting the premisses also. Christianity is in it self of so prolifick a nature, so apt to impregnate the hearts and lives of its proselytes, that it is hard to imagine, that any branch should want a due fertility that is engrafted into so vigorous a Stock.

FOR

FOR first, in its ſpring and original it is moſt ſupernatural and divine, derived immediately from him, who had nothing more of man than he purpoſely aſſumed to draw us the nearer to him as God. He it was that diſſeminated this Doctrine, and that in order to the purifying *to himſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works*; and certainly his choice abundantly juſtifies its propriety to that end, and his deſcent from Heaven on that errand puts ſo venerable a ſolemnity upon it, that though his deſcent were very aſtoniſhing, yet it will be much more ſo, that it ſhould fail of the deſigned effect.

And indeed did our Faith give us no clue to lead us to the Author, yet its compoſition would ſpeak it to be of no humane extraction, its precepts are ſo excellent and refined, ſo agreeable to the more ſpiritual part of our temper, and ſo apt as to foreſtal, ſo to cleanſe and ſublimate the more groſs and corrupt, as ſhews fleſh and blood never revealed it. Nay farther, ſo effectually providing for all thoſe advantages to mankind, which the wiſeſt of men's laws have in vain attempted, that methinks they all ſtand before it like the *Magicians* before *Moſes*, and by their impotence tacitly confeſs it to be the finger of God. 'Twere too large a Theme to confront them in the ſeveral inſtances, let it ſuffice to obſerve one which has a common influence on all; and that is the immaculate *cleanneſs* of heart, which Chriſt's, and only Chriſt's law requires. This is the only proper *baſis* on which to ſuperſtruct, firſt *innocency*, and then

*vertue*

vertue and without this the most rigid exactors of outward purity, do but transcribe the folly of him, who pumps very laboriously in a Ship, yet neglects to stop the Leak: or the worse tyranny of *Pharaoh*, in *requiring Brick without Straw*: so far is it from a severity in our Law-giver, thus to limit and restrain our thoughts, that it is an act of the greatest indulgence: by no means the laying on a new burthen, but the furnishing us with an Engine to bear with ease that weight which otherwise the stoutest *Atlas* must sink under. And were but this one precept sincerely conformed to, it would not only facilitate but ascertain the obedience to all the rest. If the *first Sparks* of ill were quencht within, what possibility is there they should ever break out into a flame? How shall he kill that dares not be angry? be *Adulterous* in act, that did not first transgress in his desire? How shall he be *perjur'd* that fears an Oath? or *defraud* that permits not himself to covet? In the like manner all *positive acts* of vertue are but the natural effects of the interior habit. Where the love of God is seated in the Heart, t'will operate in all the faculties, keep them in a busie endeavour of doing acceptable service: when *Fear* is planted there, it will break forth into outward reverence and duty; and so proportionable t'will be in every other instance. 'Tis therefore an Advice well becoming the Wisdom of *Solomon*, *Prov.* 4. *To keep the heart with all diligence*: but then it is withal the work of him who is greater than *Solomon* to teach us how to do this: for *unless He keep the City, the watch-*

*watchman waketh but in vain.* If he inſtruct not to ſecure thoſe iſſues of life, they will betray and ruin, appear indeed the *ſavour of Death unto Death.* Now of this divine art of *Tactick*s and defence, Chriſtianity is the only School, and therefore moſt fitly qualified for the producing all thoſe ſupernatural excellencies, to which the timely prepoſſeſſion of the Heart is the rudiment and principle.

AND as the *preceptive* part enjoyns the moſt exact and elevated vertue, ſo is it moſt advantageouſly enforc'd by the *Promiſſory*, which both in reſpect of the kind and value of the rewards, and alſo the manner of propoſing them, is moſt exquiſitely adapted to the ſame end.

FOR firſt, if we conſider the nature of the things promiſed, we ſhall find they are not groſs and carnal, ſuch as may court and gratifie the beſtial part of us; but ſuch as are proportioned to the ſupreme and leading principle, as feaſt a *Soul*, and ſuit with the Capacities of an *intelligence*. All the beatitudes of the Goſpel tenders to its Votaries, either relate to the purity or peace of the mind in this life; or elſe to its completer felicity hereafter. And though 'tis true, the body is not wholly unconſidered, though the addition of all temporal neceſſaries be promiſed, yet even thoſe are for the Souls ſake, either to ſecure it from the ſin of ſolicitude and diſtruſt, or to preſerve it a uſeful inſtrument for the others ſervice. And as for the future glory in which the body is to partake, 'tis to be obſerved, that fleſh and blood cannot inherit it; that load of earth which now engages to corrup-

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tion must be put off, must be calcin'd and spiritualiz'd; and thus made glorious, be cloathed upon with glory. So that in all the Gospel dispensation, there is no *provision for the flesh*, its lusts and sensualities. And then sure there cannot be a more unanswerable argument against our providing for it, than to see it left out of God's care. Indeed had we proposals of a *Mahumetan* Paradise, were we to expect our bliss only in the satiating our appetites, it might be reasonable here to whet them beforehand, to stretch them to the utmost wideness, or in the Prophet's phrase, *to enlarge our desires as Hell*, and by frequent antepasts excite our gust for that profuse perpetual meal. Or were we only to have our portion in this life, to enjoy an uninterrupted affluence of outward comforts, 'twere but good husbandry to improve them to the height, and the Wise man's advice would then cease to be Irony, *Eccles.* 11. 9. *Rejoyce O young man, and let thy heart chear thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and the sight of thine eyes.* Had we only the prospect of a *Canaan*, such an eternal inheritance as a conquering Sword could give, as the salvation of a *Joshua*, and the affluence of milk and hony could produce: 'twould be no wonder, if we never voluntarily endured the thirst and famine of the wilderness, but be always, as they, desiring meat for our lust projecting the gratifying those desires, in whose repletion we placed our happiness. But when our Religion makes us no such tender, when all its hopes are of another make, invite to those Diviner

joys of which ſenſuality has no capacity or taſte. What pretence can we have to cheriſh that *here*, which we muſt wholly be diveſted of *hereafter*? Thoſe immaterial felicities we expect, do naturally ſuggeſt to us, the neceſſity of preparing our appetites and hungers for them, without which Heaven can be no Heaven to us: for ſince the pleaſure of any thing reſults from the agreement between it and the deſire, what ſatisfaction can *Spiritual* enjoyments give unto a *Carnal* mind? Alas, what delight would it be to the Swine to be wrapt in fine Linen, and laid in Odours? His ſenſes are not gratified by any ſuch delicacies, nor would he feel any thing beſides the torment of being withheld from the mire. And as little complacency would a brutiſh Soul find in thoſe purer and refin'd pleaſures, which can only upbraid not ſatisfie him. So that could we by an impoſſible ſuppoſition phanſie ſuch a one aſſumed to thoſe fruitions, his pleaſure ſure would be as little as his preparation for it was. Thoſe *eyes* which have continually beheld vanity, would be dazled, not delighted with the *Beautifick viſion*; neither could that *Tongue*, which has accuſtomed it ſelf only to Oaths and Blaſphemies, find Harmony or Muſick in a *Hallelujah*. 'Tis the peculiar privilege of the pure in heart, *that they ſhall ſee God*; and if any others could ſo invade this their incloſure, as to take Heaven by violence, it ſurely would be a very joyleſs poſſeſſion to theſe Men, and only place them in a condition to which they have the greateſt averſion and

Antipathy.

Antipathy. So that holiness here is not only necessary to the acquiring, but the enjoyment of Bliss hereafter: And therefore unless Men will contrive to annihilate their joys, and affect the monstrous riddle of being tormented in Heaven, they cannot but from this Spirituality of the promises, infer a necessity of purifying themselves, and being capable at least of innocent Celestial joys; and since that only can be done by vertuous practice here on Earth, the Obligation thereto must needs be very pressing and indispensable. And as the *nature* of the Promises directs to this, so does the great transcendent *value* encourage and animate. *Hope* is the grand exciter of industry, and as the object of Hope is more or less *desirable*, so is the endeavour more *intense* or *remiss*; and upon this ground we must conclude the Christian has all reason to be the most indefatigable, seeing his expectations are the noblest and most encouraging. That they are so, we cannot but acknowledge, if we admit of the description which the *Spirit* gives: That *Spirit* which as he seals us to it, so is himself the earnest of that Inheritance. He in the Sacred *Scriptures* has drawn up a Map of the Countrey which we are to enter: And sure we may say of it as *Caleb* and *Joshua* did of *Canaan*, *Numb.* 14. 7. *The land is an exceeding good land.* For first, if we consider the Negative advantages it has, we shall find there is an absence of all the Ills, destructive or affrightful unto humane nature. *There shall be no more death nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain,*

*Revel.* 24. 4. Here alas, we are infeſted by all theſe. *Sorrow* and *Pain* prey and inſult on all the comforts of our lives; leave us not a Gourd, which is not like that of *Jonah*, ſmitten with theſe Worms: and then comes *Death*, the grand devourer, and ſpares not *life* it ſelf. Nay, thoſe little *reſpits* which we have from theſe are ſo embittered by unpleaſant expectations and Preſages, that we are ſad before we are *afflicted*: in *pain* without a *diſeaſe*, and in *death* in the midſt of *life*: and then a State exempted, not only from the Calamities but the Fears of theſe, may well deſerve to be lookt upon with appetite.

BUT Heaven is deſign'd for our reward, as well as reſcue, and therefore is *adumbrated* by all thoſe *poſitive excellencies* which can endear or recommend. It is a *Crown*, and that not of *thorns*, ſuch as our *Saviour*'s was, and ſuch as the more affected *Diadems* of the world oft prove unto the wearer; *but one of Glory*: nor is that *Crown* nor that *Glory* like our *ſublunary* ſplendors, which ſuddenly vaniſh, and leave the poſſeſſors to the greater obſcurity and contempt; but 'tis *permanent*, ſuch *as fades not away*, 1 *Pet.* 5. 4. or in S. *Paul*'s phraſe, *an eternal weight of glory*. But to give you its more comprehenſive Character, *'Tis a being with the Lord*, 1 *Theſſ.* 4. 17. Nay, 'tis a poſſeſſing even God himſelf. *He ſhall be their God*, *Rev.* 22. 3. and what can he want who poſſeſſes him who is all things? How can he fail of the moſt raviſhing delight, that ſtands before him *in whoſe preſence is the fulneſs of Joy*, and *at whoſe*

*whose right hand are pleasures*, and those not short or transient, *but for evermore*? So indefeasible is our estate in those *Joys*, that if we do not like mad prodigals sell it in reversion, we shall when we are once invested, be beyond the possibility of ill husbandry, not have it in our power to undo our selves. Now surely these are great and precious *promises*, such as may well sustain the weight of that inference the *Apostle* builds upon them; and engage us to *cleanse* our selves from all *filthiness* both of *flesh* and *spirit*, and *to perfect holiness in the fear of God*, 2 *Cor.* 7. 1. for they address to that *Principle* which is confestly Predominant in our *Nature*; so that if the love of *Christ* cannot, yet the love of our *selves* may constrain us. How must it then affront and baffle the enticements of sin, when we compare its empty vanishing *pleasures* with those solid and durable *joys*? What a forestalling will it be of Satan's markets, that God bids so much fairer for us; offers us that to which his ταῦτα πάντα σοι δώσω, *all this will I give thee* (could he make such a whole-sale) can bear no proportion: and how then shall we ever barter it away for those little petty commodities he retails to us; or make any other reply to his proffers, than a *get thee behind me Satan*? For alas, can we remember that we are *candidates* for a Kingdom, and yet retain the abject spirits of *slaves*? Do we expect to reign hereafter, and yet depose our selves before-hand here? suffer every the vilest lust to rule over us? Is so glorious a prize annext to the victory, and will

it not animate the faintest heart, and feeblest hands to the combate? What Lions can we fear in the way which this hope is not *Sampson enough* to encounter? How *light* are our heaviest, how *momentany* our most lasting Afflictions, if balanced with that *eternal weight of Glory*? Are we spoil'd of our goods? Here is a reserve of treasure which no *Thief*, neither the slye nor the avowed, the pilferer, nor the sequestrator can invade. Are we reduced to our *Saviour*'s destitution, not to have *where to lay our head? yet we have a building of God, an house not made with hands eternal in the Heavens.* Are we reproacht for the name of *Christ?* that *Ignominy* serves but to advance our future *Glory*, every such *Libel* here becomes *Panegyrick* there. Nay, are we persecuted to death? that sends us but to take possession of the Crown of Life. Upon such sure grounds does our Christianity set us. While we make good its condition, it pulls out the sting of all that is most deadly: And in a more comprehensive sense, possesses us of the privilege promised the *Disciples, that nothing should by any means hurt them, Mark* 16. The most adverse chances being but like the ploughing and breaking the ground in order to a more plentiful harvest. And yet we are not so wholly turned off to that reversion, as to have no supplies for the present; for besides the comfort of so great and certain an expectation in another *life* we have promises also for *this*. Even of all those internal and spiritual satisfactions which attend the *practice of piety*. The feast of a good

Conscience

Conscience is the true *Christians* daily diet, and sure whatever the rich Men of the world think, he only can be said to fare deliciously: nay, he has yet more *supernatural* food, Manna rain'd down immediately from Heaven: The *Holy Spirit* sent on purpose to refresh and support him: those Joys which differ rather in degree than kind, from those which are to be his final portion. And that the *Soul* may not be too much incommoded in her house of clay, there is provision made for that also, such necessaries secured to the body, as may keep it in *Tenantable* repair: we have *Christ*'s express promise for it, that *to those that seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all these things shall be added*; if not that superfluity which may oppress and load, (render the *body* rather the Tomb than Mansion of the *soul*) yet such as may sustain and support us: and sure 'tis easie to decide which is the happier lot. In short, we are sure enough to defray the charge of that voyage, which lands us at *Eternal bliss*: And certainly he must be of a very sluggish or querulous humour, that shall demur upon setting out, or demand higher encouragements.

AND as the *nature* and value of the *Promises* render them most proper engagements and incentives to all *vertue*; so if we consider the *manner* of proposing, we shall find them in that respect also highly contributive to the same end. For first, they are clear and express, not wrapt up in dark *ænigmatical* insinuations, wherein Men must exercise their *sagacity* as well as their *faith*: but

revealed with that plainneſs, that 'tis impoſſible for any who knows but the letter of the *Goſpel* to be ignorant of the Eternal reward it propoſes. And herein the difference belongs to *Chriſtianity* above all other *Religions*, ſome whereof have left Men ſo much in the dark, that many *Sects* among them have denied the immortality of the Soul; and ſure they were but faint encouragements they could propoſe unto that *vertue*, which was to periſh with them. What ſhould animate them to the rugged ſevere taſtes of reſtraining appetites, ſubduing paſſions, eradicating habits, who diſcerned no rewards for blameleſs *ſouls?* 'Tis true indeed, *vertue* is in her ſelf perfectly amiable, though ſhe brought no dowry, but experience us ſhews ſhe has not many *Platonick* lovers: and when ſo few are ambitious to wed her, when ſhe brings an Eternal inheritance with her, we may eaſily gueſs how little ſhe will be ſought without it. When Men once conclude that their *Spirits* ſhall vaniſh into the ſoft Air; the inference is very obvious, *Come on let us uſe the creatures as in youth*; as we find it elegantly purſued, *Wiſd.* 2. But of thoſe who acknowledged a future being, their perceptions were very miſty and obſcure. The *Heathens* had ſuch confus'd notions of their *Elyſium*, that the *Epithet* of *ſhades* belong'd more properly to the darkneſs than the refreſhment, and was a reward fit for the votaries of thoſe ambiguous *Oracles* they conſulted. And proportionably to the obſcurity of their hodes were the Exerciſes of their *Vertue*: their *piety* was even overwhelmed

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and confounded by the multitude of their *Deities*; nay which is yet stranger, their *Gods* themselves seem to have been lost in their own croud: else sure the *Athenians* would never have inscrib'd an Altar to the *unknown God*: and indeed their Offices were generally such as if they had been devoted to no other, they having as little discerning of their *Worship* as of their *God*. 'Twas wrapt up in clouds and darkness, had mysterious receſſes to which the common worshipper had no admittance; such as were to require a veneration only by not being understood: and though this must needs deprive their services of that spirit and quickness, which constitutes the *vertue* of devotion, yet alas, their Religion had more than that negative contrariety to *vertue*. Many of their *worships* being nothing but a solemnity of the foulest *vices*: and their *Divinity* taught them to violate *Morality*. A deceit *Satan* could not probably so long have triumpht in, had they had the Gospel notion of Heaven, for sure they could not have suppos'd their *Gods* of such mutable inclinations, as to affect *purity* in their Cohabitants, and *pollution* in their Votaries: or such incongruous dispensers of rewards, as to apportion an impeccable state hereafter to the most flagitious criminals on Earth.

AS to the *Jews* 'tis true, they derived their light from a clearer Fountain, were under the *Oeconomy* of immediate Revelation, and therefore might be suppos'd to have had a freer prospect into that Heaven from whence their *Law* descend-

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ed, yet even they were in this, as in many other particulars, under *Moſes* his veil, had rather dark *adumbrations*, and thoſe two overwhelmed with the multitude of expreſs temporal promiſes. The earthly *Canaan* lay ſo fair and open to their proſpect, as eaſily intercepted their view of the *Heavenly*; and their *faith*, muſt remove, at leaſt overlook that *mountain*, before it could come to any ſight of the *Horizon* and extended *Sky*. Nay, when 'tis remembred that the *Sadduces*, a great and learned part of their Doctors, denied all future being, we muſt think the intimation of it were very obſcure; it being ſcarce imaginable, that any conſidering Men ſhould think the *Soul* expir'd with the *Body* upon any other ground, but that they knew not what after ſtate to aſſign it. So that though they wanted not *figures* and *ſhadows*, or, as the Apoſtle calls them, *patterns of Heavenly things*, *Heb.* 9.23. yet they ſeem'd not to have been well underſtood, and the generality of Men were not only in their Perſons, but their Underſtandings denied entrance into the *holy of holies*; penetrated not that myſtical repreſentation, which was within the Veil: And anſwerable to this dimneſs of their perceptions was the whole *ſyſtem* and *body* of their *Religion*, which rather entertain'd it ſelf in thoſe *external bodily* performances, which affected the *ſenſe*, than in thoſe *Divine* and *Spiritual* raptures, which purified and elevated the *Soul*. 'Tis the *Apoſtle*'s affirmation, *Heb.* 9. *That the ſacrifices there offered could not make him that did the ſervice perfect, as pertaining*

*pertaining to the conscience*, and he gives the reason in subjoyning, that they stood only in *meats and drinks*, and *carnal ordinances*. Alas, what propriety had all their legal purifications towards the cleansing of the mind? That might be in the *Mire*, while the body was in the *Laver*: and while the surface of the Man was sprinkled with blood, the heart might be more bestial than those creatures who lent the *ablution*. And indeed if we consider their morality, we shall find that outside formal ceremony, had proceeded to infect and poison that also. The outward restraint, the bare forbearance of an actual commission, being by them thought a full compliance with all the Negative precepts: So that we see *Christ* is fain to assert the internal part of the Obligation, and extend the duty to the thoughts and inclinations. Besides, those acts of *vertue* they perform'd were commonly such as had an Aspect, rather on their temporal well-being, than distant and unseen rewards; their Justice, and Charity confin'd to their own *Nation*, directed to the flourishing of their own *Common wealth*: whereas *Aliens* were devoted to their rapine and despight; so that if they were *vertues*, they were rather *Political* than *Moral*, and indeed while they placed so much of their hopes on *Earth*, look'd on *secular* plenty and tranquility as their reward, 'twas but consonant they should square their endeavours by that measure, and consider things not simply in their native properties of good or ill, but according to their tendency towards that they esteem'd their *felicity*.

BUT

BUT God has provided, as the *Apoſtle* ſays, *Heb.* 11. 40. *better things for us*, has not only made a better Covenant with us, but has *eſtabliſht it upon better promiſes*, Chap. 8. 6. given us clearer revelations, not only of our *duty*, but our *recompence*; the veil in *Chriſt* is done away, and we all with open face, *Behold as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord*, 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. The Goſpel puts the evidences of our inheritance into our own hands, ſeal'd by his explicit and direct promiſe, who cannot lye: and that not only engag'd by way of *munificence*, but bargain and contract, as the purchaſe of that *price*, which our *Redeemer* fully paid in our behalf. And ſure this is in the *Apoſtle*'s phraſe *ſtrong conſolation*; and if ſo, it muſt be forcible enticement likewiſe, he cannot but run alacriouſly, who has the prize in his Eye, nor can S. *Paul* uſe a more preſſing argument to his *Corinthians*, *To be ſtedfaſt, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*, than this aſſurance, *That their labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord*, 1 *Cor.* 15. 58.

AND as this clear propoſal of the *promiſes* is moſt proper to encourage and inſpirit our endeavours, ſo is the conditionality moſt efficacious to neceſſitate and engage them. Had *Heaven* been only promis'd as a largeſs, and with a blind promiſcuous bounty diſpens'd without diſcrimination, how much it might have rais'd our *gratitude*, I know not, but ſure it would not have excited our *induſtry*, which in all inſtances we find is whetted by intereſt; and where that is

otherwiſe

otherwise secur'd; Men generally estimate it a part of the benefit that their labour is superseded; and please themselves no less in a lazy bequest, than a full enjoyment. So that indeed it is this circumstance of the *promises* that must give life to all the rest, and make them operative toward the producing of *good life*; for admit the *joys* we expect never so *Divine* and *Spiritual* for their kind, never so great and transcendent for degree, and these also represented to us in the most clear and convincing manner; yet if they be tendered not as objects of our choice, but the certainty of our fate *felicities* which we are only concerned to enjoy, but not to acquire, they may make us glad, but surely not diligent; it being but a cold inducement to any undertaking to be assured 'tis perfectly needless: we have therefore all reason to confess it our greatest advantage towards *vertue*, that God has so linkt our *hopes* and our *duty* together. And indeed when we consider the great disproportion between the one and the other; the infinity of the *reward*, with the despicableness of the *service*: we must resolve that he had no other design in making his *promises* conditional, than to engage us by our interest to that *holiness*, to which he saw our inclinations did not bind us: that it was an artifice of his *love* to ensnare us into two *felicities* by proposing of one, enforce us to take one good in the way to another, *vertue* in passage to *glory*.

AND indeed who would not think this method so invincibly efficacious, as might supersede the

the neceſſity of any other, but God who underſtands our thoughts long before, *Pſal.* 139. 1. foreſaw that notwithſtanding this propoſal of a *Canaan*, there would be *Reubenites* and *Gadites*, who would ſet up their reſt on this ſide of *Jordan*; ſo intent on the commodity of their Cattle, as to be content themſelves to be part of the Herd, and *become like the beaſts that periſh*: That there would be men of ſo ignoble, diſingenuous tempers, as none of theſe cords of a man would be able to draw: and therefore there is another part of the *Goſpel-Oeconomy* fitted to their capacities; the *threats* and *interminations*, thoſe terrors of the *Lord*, which as Goads may drive thoſe brutiſh Creatures who will not be attracted: that thoſe who think themſelves perfectly unconcern'd in *David's* queſtion, *Who ſhall aſcend unto the hill of the Lord*, *Pſal.* 24. 3. may yet ſtartle at *Eſay's*, *Who among us can dwell with everlaſting burnings?* Of ſo formidable a kind are thoſe menaces, as is ſufficient to awake the moſt drowſie ſtupid *Soul*, and are moſt apt to operate upon that part of their temper, which evacuated the gentler method: That very ſenſuality which made them deſpiſe *Heaven*, may help to enhanſe the dread of *Hell*; the lack of a *drop of water* will be moſt inſupportable to him who fared deliciouſly every day; thoſe *flames* will be yet more ſcorching to thoſe bodies, who by ſtudious effeminacies and ſoftneſs have ſuperadded an artificial tenderneſs to the natural; nor will the *gnawing of the worm* appear more intolerable to any, than thoſe who here

here make it their business to tye up its *Jaws*, gag or stupifie that *Conscience* which would now admonish, but will there torment. And when to this is added the *perpetuity* of these *pains*, that *the worm shall never die, the fire never be quench'd*, certainly this puts such an edge upon the terror, as may well make it in the *Apostle*'s phrase, *quick* and *powerful, searching even to the dividing asunder of the Soul and Spirit, the joynts and marrow*, when we are assur'd *That the Axe is thus laid unto the root of the tree, and that every tree that brings not forth good fruit, must be hewn down and cast into the fire*, we shall sure be warn'd *to bring forth meet fruits of repentance, and fly from the wrath to come.*

BUT because neither invitations nor threats can avail with those who are any way invincibly impeded to apply them to their benefit: since the most *glorious prize*, the most formidable danger is insignificant to him, who wants power to run unto the one, or from the other; it has pleased God to inspirit and actuate all his *Evangelical* methods, by a concurrence of *supernatural* strength, makes it not only eligible, but possible, I may say easie and pleasant for us to do whatever he commands us: and notwithstanding our natural debility, makes us through *Christ* which strengthens us, *able to do all things*: by his Spirit he prevents, assists, restrains, excites, comforts, convinces, gives grace, and adds to that the happier largess of a will to use it, and knowledge to discern the want of more: infusing to the *Soul* an ardent thirst of greater powers, and readier means

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of ſervice, which the performance actuates to greater ſtrengths, and yet enflames to new deſires, and more importunate purſuits, whilſt God at once beſtows and crowns his own donations; ſtill giving unto him that has, till that at laſt he give himſelf; and *grace is ſwallowed up in glory.* And to aſſure us of this aid, he has been pleaſed to oblige himſelf; deſcends to the ſolemnity of a *Pact* and *Covenant*; has indented with us, and conſtituted it a principal part of the new and everlaſting *Covenant made with mankind in the blood of the Son of God, to ſend the comforter, his Holy Spirit, to be with us till the end of the world,* and do all this. So that the Goſpel is at once the aſſigner of our tasks, and the *Magazine* of our ſtrength; ſo much Spirit goes along with that Letter; ſo much internal grace is annexed to its outward adminiſtration, as will to all, who do not reſiſt it, infallibly render it *the power of God to ſalvation.* For 'tis not the ſole privilege of a S. *Paul,* but the common portion of all *Chriſtians, That God's grace ſhall be ſufficient for them*; which is ſure a more Goſpel-like promiſe, than that it ſhould be too ſtrong for them: ſo violent and irreſiſtible as to commit a rape upon their *Spirits*; ſuch a mighty wind as drives them headlong upon *duty.* Indeed this competency is of all other proportions the moſt *incentive* to induſtry; we ſee in *Temporals,* too little makes men deſperate, and too much careleſs; and certainly 'twould be the ſame in *Spirituals*: but now when we have ſtock enough to ſet up with, and that too of ſo improvable

vable a nature, that is capable of infinite advancement, and yet on the other ſide no leſs capable of total decay alſo, it being given with this expreſs condition, that upon neglect it ſhall be withdrawn: So that our own ſloth may make us *poor*, but nothing elſe can keep us from being abundantly *rich*: What can be imagin'd more animating to diligence and endeavour? And this being the condition wherein our *Chriſtianity* has placed us, added to the former conſiderations, will beyond exception or *ſubterfuge*, evince its perfect aptitude and fitneſs for the end to which it was aim'd, *the planting and nouriſhing all true Vertue among men*, the introducing the tree of life into the world again, and ſo forming us a *Paradiſe* even amidſt the briers and thorns of our exil'd ſtate.

## CHAP. II.

*The Character of Chriſtian-mens Practice, ſhewing their multiplied failance both from the rule of that holy profeſſion, and its genuine effect.*

AND now who can ſuſpect that a *cauſe* ſo rightly diſpos'd ſhould miſs of its *effect*? That this ſo *auſpicious Planet* ſhould be counter-influenc'd by any *malevolent Star*? Or that what has ſo many tenures in us, ſhould be finally diſſeis'd? For, admit we have not the Piety

to be prevail'd upon by the reverence of the *Author*; yet the excellency of its *compoſition* does ſo much recommend it to our reaſon, that we muſt put off the beſt part of our *Nature* to evacuate the force of our Religion: Nay, ſuppoſing us to have done that too, to have ſtruck our ſelves out of the liſt of *Rationals*, yet if we keep but the rank of *Animals* if we have not extinguiſht paſſion and ſenſe, it deſcends even to them; addreſſes to our hopes and fears with moſt importunate ſollicitations, and convincing motives: So that unleſs we have the abſurd ill luck to have much of the *Stoick*, and nothing of the *Philoſopher*, 'twill be impoſſible to reſiſt its impreſſions; And ſure he that contemplates this, will be apt with ſome confidence to conclude *Chriſtendom* to be the *Goſhen* of the world, not only in reſpect of its *light*, but of its *immunity* from all thoſe *locuſts* and *Caterpillars*, thoſe ſwarms of mean and ſordid Vices which both cover and devour the reſt of the Earth.

BUT this muſt be the inference of a meer *contemplative*, a Recluſe that converſes only with his own meditations: For let him be ſo much *ſecular*, as once to look abroad, the moſt tranſient glance will ſerve to unravel all his hopeful *ſpeculation*, and ſhew him that *Chriſtendom* may be as much Heathen as *America*: Whereas 'tis uſually ſaid, that ill *Manners* produce good Laws, we have reverſt the *Aphoriſm*, and our good *Law* has introduc'd the moſt corrupt manners. Our holy *faith*, which like a Foundation ſhould ſupport good

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works, has like a gulf ſwallowed them up. And ſo univerſal a depravation is there among us, that we have ſcarce any thing left to diſtinguiſh us from the moſt barbarous people, but a better name and worſe vices.

AND here, what terms of wonder or of grief can be ſignificant enough to expreſs or to bewail ſo ſtrange and ſo perverſe degeneration, that the *light* of the *world* ſhould thus darken it; the *ſalt* of the *earth* be the means of putrifying and corrupting it? That thoſe who were by God drawn out from the *Heathen* world, ſhould ſo outvy the *Gentiles* crimes, as if they had forſaken them, only becauſe they were too innocent? This indeed is one of *Satan*'s ſubtileſt ſtratagems, to fill Chriſt's Camp thus with his Soldiers, by whoſe inteſtine treacheries, he has been more triumphant than by all his open aſſaults and avowed hoſtilities. What a late *States-man* ſaid (Prophetically, if we may judge by the event) of *England*, that *it was a vivacious animal that could never die except it kill'd it ſelf*, is no leſs true of the *Church*, which has always been invulnerable againſt all darts, but what have been taken out of its own Quiver. Of this the Primitive times were pregnant teſtimonies, where all the moſt witty cruelties, the moſt bloody perſecutions, never made any breach in her: But ſhe ſtood firmer for all thoſe batteries, and like an Arch'd Building, became more ſtrong and compact, by that weight which was deſign'd to cruſh her: But the *Vice* of *Profeſſors* undermines her very founda-

tion, and does as much exceed the *deſtructiveneſs* of the moſt hoſtile aſſaults, as inteſtine *treachery* is more ruinous and fatal, than foreign *violence*.

AS long as the lives of Chriſtians were the *tranſcripts* of their doctrine, they rendred it venerable to all, and gave a preſumption there was ſomething more than *humane* in it, that could work ſuch ſignal *effects*, that could ſo transform *men* as to make the *adulterer* chaſte, the *drunkard* temperate, the *covetous* liberal, the *contentious* peaceable. *This*, This was the way to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, *Tit.* 2. 10. And then the rule of *contraries* directs us to conclude very diſtant *effects* from our now ſo diſtant *practices*, that our very *religion* ſhould partake of the *infamy* of our lives, and be thought rather a *myſtery* of *iniquity* than *godlineſs*.

THUS is *Chriſt* wounded in the houſe of his Friends, and has more reproach caſt on him by thoſe that profeſs his name, than by the loudeſt blaſphemies of thoſe that oppoſe it. For when thoſe who have not opportunity to examine our *faith*, ſee the enormouſneſs of our *works*, what ſhould hinder them from meaſuring the *Maſter* by the *Diſciples*? it being ſcarce imaginable that any one *Sect* of Men ſhould ſo univerſally run counter to all the rules of their profeſſion: For let any ſober Heathen look upon *Chriſtendom*, as it is at *this day* weltring in the blood, not of *Martyrdom* but *War*, and will it be poſſible for him

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to think it owns a Gospel of Peace; or that those who so perpetually do those outrages they are unwilling to suffer, profess obedience to the *Royal Law* of *Love thy neighbour as thy self*, Jam. 2.8. Can he see the violence and oppressions, the frauds and underminings, the busie scramblings for little parcels of Earth; and yet believe we count our selves strangers and pilgrims in it, and have laid up our treasure in Heaven? Can he observe the strange and almost universal distortion of speech, whereby it has lost its native property of being interpreter of the mind, and under intelligible words so far exhibits the *Babel* confusion, that no man understands anothers meaning? and can he imagine we have any such Precepts, as *Lye not one to another*, or any such penalty upon the infringer, as *exclusion from the new Jerusalem*? Shall we hear our God mention'd more frequently and earnestly in our Imprecations than our Prayers, and every part of our crucified Saviour re-crucified in our horrid Oaths; And shall he not think that his second executioners bear him as little reverence as his first; Or that he has given no such command, as *Swear not at all*? When he discerns Self-preservation bow'd so as the Supreme Law; Can he ever dream of another so inconsistent obligation as that of *taking up the Cross*? Or that *suffering for righteousness sake* is one of our greatest Felicities, when he sees us run so affrighted from it, that no crime, Perjury, Rebellion, Murder, is block enough in our way to stop our flight? In fine, when he considers how

much of our buſineſs it is, firſt to excite, and then to cloy the fleſh, to ſpur it on to riots, even beyond its own propenſions, that the whole year is but one mad carnaval, and we are *voluptuous* not ſo much upon *deſire* or appetite, as by way of *exploit* and bravery: When I ſay he conſiders this, can he poſſibly gueſs our *inſtitution* directs us to beat down the body, to *mortify the fleſh with the affections and luſts*, interdicts us all *rioting and drunkenneſs*, *chambring and wantonneſs*, and *all proviſion for the fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof?* Certainly all rules of Diſcourſe will direct him to the quite contrary concluſion. And when he ſees a Set of men that have enhans'd the common humane pravity, he will be apt to infer their Principles have taught them the improvement: And upon that ſuppoſal he wanted not temptation to his Option that ſaid, *Let my ſoul be with the Philoſophers.*

AND while we thus miſrepreſent our holy profeſſion to *others*, it will be no wonder if we finally do it to *our ſelves*, that we forget its *native ſhape*, and look on her only in the *ugly dreſs* our ſelves have put on, and that effect ſeems already too viſible among us: Our lives have ſo long confuted it, that we triumph over it as a baffled thing; and like *Amnon*, loath it becauſe we have raviſh'd and defil'd it. Many of us take notice of the better Morals of *Turks* and *Infidels*, not in reproach of our ſelves but our Religion, and becauſe we have ſo many *Lepers*, think *Abanah* and *Pharphar*, better than all the waters of *Iſrael*,

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this is openly in the mouths of many, but is ſo prodigiouſly irrational as well as unjuſt, that one can ſcarce think it poſſible to be in their *hearts*, unleſs they be purſued by the fate of habitual lyars, that at laſt come to perſwade themſelves.

CERTAINLY there is no other parallel inſtance wherein men conclude ſo perverſely: He that ſhews a man that precipice upon whoſe brink he ſtands, that intreats, yea, importunes him to retire from the *danger*; nay, bribes him with the greateſt rewards to chuſe *ſafety*, has done all that can be expected from a friend, or charitable Man: And if after all, the wretched Perſon ſo advis'd, ſhall caſt himſelf head-long upon ruine; aſſuredly no Inqueſt would return his Murder in any other form than that of *Felo de ſe*. And why then ſhould our Chriſtianity be accus'd of theſe ills which it would infallibly avert, if our obſtinacy would permit it? Indeed the charge is ſo wild, that it ſeems rather deſign'd as an artifice of diverſion, a ſprout of that firſt fig-tree which was to hide the nakedneſs of lapſed *Adam*. Men think it policy to transfer their guilts, and are willing, the *violence* of their luſts ſhould paſs for the impotence of their Religion. Like irregular Patients, blaming their Phyſician for thoſe ill accidents which they know owing only to their own unrulineſs. A pregnant teſtimony of the reproachful nature of ſin, that men are content to betake themſelves to the moſt forlorn ſhifts to avoid the owning it: But the

conſciouſneſs is ſo preſſing and intolerable, that with many it drives on to yet higher outrages: 'tis not enough for men to decry their *Chriſtianity* as a feeble inſignificant thing, but they load it even with contradictory imputations, and that which ſometimes they call *the fooliſhneſs of preaching*, to bring it in ſcorn and contempt, ſhall at another be ſtiled an *Art* and *trick* to bring it into ſuſpicion and hatred, be arraign'd for impoſture and deceit, a project of impoſing upon credulous ſouls, and gaining real advantages to the managers, while they feed the ſilly *Proſelyte* with imaginary ones. How groundleſs a calumny this is, as it appears from the ſanctity and eminent ſimplicity of Chriſtian Religion, which above all things excludes fraud and falſhood; ſo alſo from the deſignments and aims of its firſt promulgators, who as they cannot be ſuppos'd dextrous enough to lay ſuch a ſcene of taking Pageantry; ſo all their viſible acqueſts were ſcourgings and impriſonments, perſecutions and death. If this were the caſe, it would indeed go near to reconcile the before-mentioned contradictory imputations, whilſt the impoſing upon credulous ſouls at this dear rate, would be in very deed *the fooliſhneſs of Preaching*, the greateſt madneſs in the world. Men of common reaſon would be aſham'd to uſe ſuch frivolous cavils: But who can without horror hear them from profeſt Chriſtians? That while *Infidels* are modeſt in their reproaches, look upon our Doctrine only as erroneous, *Diſciples* ſhould be bitter, and charge it as inſidious and

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treacherous? Thus does the *Church* experiment the truth of her blessed *Lord's Predictions*, and finds her *foes are those of her own house*: And though she be Christ's *Dove*, yet is subjected to the fate of the *Viper*, and has her bowels torn out by those that spring from them.

THESE are the growing consequences of *resolute impiety*, he who will not be kept within the bounds of duty, seldom contents himself with that bare violation: He not only *breaks the bonds in sunder*, but *casts them* away too; is impatient they should keep a reputation to upbraid him, when he has robb'd them of the power of restraining him: And this sure is the bottom of all that deep reasoning, by which men have learnt to argue themselves and others out of their *Creed*: And though this be indeed the great *Arcanum*, the *Philosophers stone* they aim at; yet they have met with another good experiment by the way: And have, by I know not what *Chymistry*, extracted a reputation out of these most unapt *materials*. He passes for a considering man that disputes principles, and is thought most to own his *reason* that least owns his *faith*: And then 'twill be no wonder if this success animate, and give them not only confidence, but vanity to avow what is thus creditable.

INDEED Satan is too subtle a manager to lose this advantage, and the event sadly shews, he has not neglected to improve it, as appears not only by the number of such pretenders unto reason, but even by their advancing to higher degrees.

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The *voluptuary* who likes his portion in this world, and fears that in another, is at firſt only prompted by his intereſt to quarrel the *laſt Articles* of the *Creed*, and ſo in his own defence denies the *life everlaſting*: But when he finds his neceſſity made a vertue, and himſelf ſtruck into the repute of a wit; upon that account he doubts not, his fame will encreaſe with his irreligion, and ſo proceeds ſtill to unravel farther, till at laſt he leaves not ſo much as *I believe in God.* That many have advanc'd ſo far is too evident, and by ſome ſo own'd, that they will not thank his charity, that ſhall hope better of them.

'TWAS once the triumph of infant Chriſtianity, that it ſilenc'd all the *Heathen Oracles*, and within a while demoliſh'd even the *Synagogue* too: But alas, its mature age gives us that effect in a moſt inverted ſenſe, it now has ſerv'd to ſuppreſs even the common notions of a *Deity*, turn'd out the *one* as well as the *many* Gods, and inſtead of *Polytheiſts* and *Idolaters* has made *Atheiſts*, and that which Chriſt tells us was deſign'd *to perfect and fill up the Law*, has by the ſtrange pravity of its profeſſors at once obliterated both *Law* and *Law-giver* out of mens minds, thereby exemplifying the old Axiom, *Corruptio optima eſt peſſima*; and the *Saint* as well as the *Angel*, if he deſert his innocence, commences Fiend and *Devil.* Theſe are ſuch ſad, ſuch direful tranſmutations as excite not ſo much wonder, as grief and lamentation; and

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what Rivers, what Oceans of tears are competent to bewail ſuch unutterable evils?

THE removal of the *Candleſtick* is ſo formidable a *judgment*, that the threatning of it, is us'd by Chriſt as the moſt awaking menace to the Seven Churches, *Revel.* 2. 3. but the removing it by our own hands is yet an enhancement of that higheſt calamity; when men are come to ſuch an inſenſate obduration, that they court their *Plagues*, become their own *Lictors*, and make that their *choice*, which is their extremeſt *puniſhment*, they are certainly too ſecure of that ruine they call for: And may we not fear it may prove *general*, and involve us all? That while ſo *many* cry out to be deliver'd from their Chriſtianity as their load and preſſure, and ſo few expreſs their diſſent to that demand, God may in judgment grant it, hearken to thoſe that cry loudeſt, reſcue his Goſpel from our profane and impious violations, and give it to others that may bring forth the fruits of it.

NOR is this to be fear'd only from the explicite importunities of the blaſphemous, for it is interpretatively the vote of many others; whoever give themſelves up to the dominion of any luſt, do implicitly renounce their obedience to Chriſt, and ſay, *we will not have this man to rule over us.* And when he is thus depos'd from his regal and directive power, we have reaſon to believe he will deſpiſe a mere titular ſoveraignty, not ſuffer the Scepter of his Word to remain as an empty Ceremony among thoſes who pay it no real

real obedience: nor be again cloath'd with Purple, crown'd and ſaluted King to advance the triumph of his ſcorn and Crucifixion.

NOR will the fawning Profeſſions of the demure hypocrite avert, but accelerate this Fate: He that makes the *Golden Scepter* in Chriſt's hand, a rod of *iron* in his own, that thinks his Saintſhip licenſes him to all the ſevere cenſures, and the yet ſeverer (becauſe more effective) oppreſſions of others, he is certainly to be look'd on not only as a Rebel, but an Uſurper too, and is of all others the higheſt provoker. He that tramples under foot the Son of God, does not ſo much violate him, as he that pretends to erect him a Throne upon blood and rapine, on perjury and ſacrilege: Nor does he that accounts the blood of the *Covenant* an unholy thing, ſo much profane it as he that uſes it as a *Varniſh* to paint over his fouleſt luſts. The Apoſtle has long ſince told us, *there is no concord between Chriſt and Belial*, and can we think he will be patient thus to be made ſubſervient to his enemy? or ſuffer his *Ark* to be ſet for the ſupport, which ſhould be the confuſion of *Dagon*? Do we find him ſo ſeverely upbraid the hypocriſie of the *Jews*, that *ſtole, murdered, committed adultery, and ſwore falſely, and yet came and ſtood before him in his houſe*, Jer. 7. 9. and ſhall we hope he will connive at it in Chriſtians? Was it intolerable profanation in them to account his houſe a den of Robbers, and ſhall we be permitted to make it ſo? They are ſent to *Shiloh* to read their

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own deſtiny, and ſurely we are as likely to find ours there too; to be deprived of thoſe advantages which we have ſo unworthily us'd: Nor can we expect, that though God cauſe the natural *Son to riſe ſtill as well on the evil as the good*, yet that the *Sun of righteouſneſs* ſhall continue to ſhine on thoſe who will only Bask themſelves in his Rays, grow *Æthiops* from his *neighbourhood*; but will not work by his *light*.

WHEN all this is conſider'd, what a ſad aboad does it make? When the *blaſphemies* of the Profane, the *ſenſualities* of the Voluptuous, and the *mockeries* of the Hypocrite, ſend, as it were, daily Challenges to Heaven, we cannot but look it ſhould at laſt overcome its long-ſuffering, awake God to vindicate the honour of his Name, and not ſuffer it any longer to be thus proſtituted and polluted: that when he ſees his light ſerve only to aid us the more ſubtilly to contrive our deeds of darkneſs, he ſhould withdraw it, ſmite us with blindneſs like the *Sodomites*, whom he finds in ſuch impure purſuits: And were that *blindneſs* ſuch as our Saviour ſpeaks of, *Joh.* 9. 41. that inferr'd the *no ſin*, 'twere a deſirable infliction; but alas, it has none of that Property: That which is deſigned for the puniſhment can never be the extenuation of our guilt; but as in Hell there is an unhappy ſeparation of *effects*, the ſcorching of the *flame* without the light, and the blackneſs of *night* without the reſt: So in this neareſt approach to it, This Portal to thoſe Chambers of death, there is the ignorance without the excuſe,

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the darkneſs diveſted of its native quality of hiding: And when we are entred among Heathens here, we muſt yet expect a ſadder portion of *Apoſtatis'd* Chriſtians hereafter.

AND O that this conſideration might at laſt have its proper operation, rouſe and awake us timely to prevent thoſe evils which it will be impoſſible to cure! That by bringing forth ſome more genuine and kindly fruits, we may avert that diſmal ſentence, *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground.* That men would generally lay to heart both the ſin and infamy of being *promoters of publick ruine*; and quench that fire with their tears, which their ſins have kindled, that the faſting and prayers, the ſighs and groans of the Primitive Chriſtians may ſupplant the prophane luxuries, the carnal Jollities of the Modern. And that Sackcloath and aſhes may become the *univerſal mode*, the only *faſhionable* dreſs among us. This both Reaſon and Religion ſuggeſt as matter of our moſt importunate wiſhes; would God our hopes were but half as pregnant.

BUT the leſs appearance there is of this univerſal reformation, the more jealouſly ought every ſingle perſon to look on himſelf, leſt he be one that obſtructs it: For ſo he does who ſtays till it be a *faſhion*, but neglects to contribute his part to the making it ſo. Men are willing to diſcourage themſelves from attempts of this kind, and with an unſeaſonable modeſty, can reflect what a nothing one man is to ſo many millions. when alas, all that vaſt Empire Vice has got in the world,

world, is founded in the pravity of single persons, and would certainly be ruin'd by their reformation. The more reasonable Collection would be that he that considers himself but as *one*, should not suffer himself to grow into *less*; to fall from that *Unite* to a *Cypher*, by permitting sloth or cowardize to enfeeble and emasculate him: but on the contrary should recollect his spirits, actuate all his strength, and therefore be sure to do his utmost, because that *utmost* is but a *little*.

AND to this certainly there want not encouragements. We see in common affairs the wonders that industry and resolution are able to effect, and a single courage being exerted, has often without *Romance*, overcome *giantly* difficulties. 'Tis a great prejudice is cast upon vertue by the pusillanimity of those that *like*, but dare not *abet* her. When most men commit all impieties daringly, and openly, and those few that do mourn for it, do it but in secret, the example of the one is contagious, but the other has no means to diffuse it self. Would men stoutly own *duty*, and not like *Peter*, *follow Christ afar off*, they might yet hope to make a party and *gain ground* in the world. And how noble an attempt were this, thus to encounter Satan in his highest triumph, and recover a *lost field*? And methinks those who have any warmth of Piety glowing within, may easily thus improve it into a flame? ἐπιχορηγῆσαι ἐν τῇ πίστει τὴν ἀρετὴν, *add to their faith vertue*, that signifies *courage*: and then readily would succeed that train of Christian excellencies reckoned up by St.

St. *Peter*, 2 *Epiſt.* 1. 5. *knowledge*, *temperance*, *patience*, *godlineſs*, and ſuperſtruct on theſe, as it there follows, *brotherly kindneſs*, and the moſt comprehenſive *charity*. We ſhould be not only devout towards *God*, but zealous towards *Men*, endeavouring by all prudent means to recover them out of thoſe ſnares of the Devil, whereby they are taken captive. And ſince among all thoſe ſnares there is none more entangling, than the creditableneſs and repute of cuſtomary vices, to ſet themſelves eſpecially againſt that overgrown covering and ornament; thoſe *Locks* wherein its great, its *Sampſon like ſtrength* lies: And ſtrive to render it as condemn'd as it is baſe: And to this purpoſe nothing is ſo apt, as the exalting its competitor, fetching vertue out of the Dungeon, that darkneſs and obſcurity wherein it has long lain forgotten, and by making it illuſtriouſly viſible in their own practice, put into the poſſibility of attracting others. Indeed there only it appears in its true ſplendor, they are but dead colours the ſublimeſt ſpeculation can put on it, he that would draw it to the life, muſt imprint it upon his own. And thus every pious Perſon may, nay, ought to be a *Noah*, a preacher of righteouſneſs: And if it be his fortune to have as imperſwaſible an Auditory, if he cannot avert the *deluge*, it will yet be the providing himſelf an *Ark*, the delivering, yea, advancing his own Soul, if he cannot benefit other Mens.

NAY, his being a *Noah*, may qualifie him to be a *Moſes* too, give him ſuch an intereſt with Heaven,

Heaven, that he may be fit to stand in the gap to be an *intercessour* and Mediator for a provoking people. And God knows never any generation more needed that *office*: nor any part of this more than our sinful Nation, which having long been in the *furnace*, is indeed now come out, but so unpurified, that we have all reason to expect a return, and that not upon the former frustrated design of *refining*; but upon that more infallible and fatal one of *consuming* us. This is so dreadful, but withal so just an expectation, that if there be any *Jacobs* among us; any, *who can wrestle and prevail with God*, there never was so pressing need of their intercession. O let all that are thus fitted for it vigorously undertake this pious work; let no *Moses*'s hands ever wax heavy, but be always held up in a devout importunity; let them transcribe that holy Oratory, which he so often effectually used, plead to God his own cause, with a *What wilt thou do to thy great Name?* And when there is nothing in us that can pretend to any thing but vengeance, ransack God's *bosom*, rifle his *bowels* for arguments of *compassion*, repeat to him his own *titles*, that he is *long suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin*, *Numb.* 14. 18. And by these sollicite, yea, conjure him to pity. And how great an ardency is required to this intercession? What *strong* cries must they be that shall drown so *loud* a clamour of impieties? And how does it reproach the slightness of our sleepy heartless addresses? Can we hope to bind God's hands

with Withs and Straws? To arreſt his vengeance with ſuch faint and feeble aſſaults? And when *nature* and *danger* ſuggeſt to Heathen *Nineveh*, not *only* to cry, but cry *mightily* to God, ſhall the ſuperaddition of our Religion damp ours into a *whiſper*, a ſoft *unaudible* ſound? A ſtorm will teach the profane Mariner to pray in earneſt, and alaſs! we have not wanted that diſcipline. 'Tis not long ſince we might have ſaid with thoſe, *Acts* 27. *No ſmall Tempeſt has long lain on us, neither Sun nor Stars in many days*, nay in many *years*, *appearing*, nothing but black and diſmal portents of a final *wreck* to a poor *weather beaten Church*, and then ſure 'twas time to be importunate, to learn ſo much of inſtruction from the waves that toſſed us, as to make our prayers keep peace with them, in ſwift uninterrupted ſucceſſion, in loud and not to be reſiſted violence. That we did ſo *then* I dare not affirm, but ſure I am, the neceſſity of it is not *yet* out-dated; for though the Sky however black with clouds carry no thunder in it; though the impetuous winds that blow from every quarter, ſhould not break out in tempeſt, and bring ſhipwrack to us; yet we too fully exemplifie the truth of the *Prophets* Axiome, *That the wicked are like the troubled Sea, that cannot reſt.* We have *within* us a principle of ruine, which can operate, though nothing from *without* excite it. A Tempeſt is not always neceſſary to ſink a Ship, one treacherous leak may do it in the greateſt calm, and what ſecurity can there then be to our torn Veſſel, whoſe rents our continued diviſions

do

do ſtill keep open? Indeed our *preſervation* muſt be as our *reſtauration* was, the work of Omnipotence; thither therefore let us addreſs with S. *Peter's* pathetick Prayer, *Save, Lord, or we periſh.* O that all who are concern'd in the grant of that Petition, would qualifie themſelves to preſent it; lift up ſuch pure hands, *that God who hears not ſinners, Joh.* 9. may yet hear them, afford a gracious ear, and give an anſwer of *Peace.*

## CHAP. III.

*A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Inconſideration.*

THE laſt Section having defeated all the promiſing hopes of the former, by ſhewing us how ſadly we have fruſtrated all the deſigns and engagements of our profeſſion; enervated all thoſe apt and powerful methods, and how perfectly contrary our *practices* are to our *rules*, mere curioſity would more prompt us to enquire what are the hidden *cauſes* of thoſe ſo ſtrange *effects*; what unhappy propriety there is in the *ſoil*, that after ſo much *culture* and husbandry it ſhould produce nothing but *wild* Grapes? and by what arts and wiles Satan has not only evaded, but even retorted thoſe blows which were aimed at him. But as in *diſeaſes* the *pains* and

languiſhings are obvious to the groſſeſt ſenſe, but the *ſprings* and originals of them moſt frequently lie deep, and are ſo complicated and interwoven, that they require much art to ſearch and to diſtinguiſh them: nay, do often mock the moſt ſubtil inquiſitor, and ſend him back with mere conjectures and uncertain gueſſes: ſo in this *Epidemick* Spiritual diſtemper, the *malady* is notorious and viſible, but the *cauſes* of it not ſo eaſily determin'd, yet that not ſo much from the darkneſs as the number of them; ſo many do pretend, and that with very good colour, to this unhappy, this monſtrous birth, that a *Solomon* himſelf muſt have made the propoſal of dividing it, as not being able to have aſſign'd it entire to any one Mother.

INDEED ſo many are the concurrents towards it, that it would far exceed the limits of this little Tract, but to point at them: I ſhall not therefore undertake any ſuch *exact* enumeration, but ſhall only take notice of thoſe which either for the generality or degree of their efficacy appear the moſt *eminent*.

AND firſt the great and ſtupid *Inconſideration* which moſt Men have concerning their Religion, may well paſs for a main cauſe of its fruſtration. *Chriſtianity* may make *Archimides* his *challenge*; give it but where it may ſet its foot; allow but a ſober advertence to its propoſals, and it will move the whole *world*: it comes with moſt invincible and controuling arguments, but ſtill they are arguments, and thoſe muſt firſt obtain

*attention*

*attention*, before they can force *aſſent*; they will moſt infallibly weigh down the *ſcales*, though the whole world were the *counter balance*; but then that muſt preſuppoſe their being put into thoſe Scales; their being entertain'd with ſo much of deliberation, as may try and examine their weight. In a word, they addreſs to us as Men, that is, *creatures* endued by God with *rational* Souls and diſcurſive faculties; but if we will ſuppreſs theſe, and ſet up only the *brute* to give audience, we muſt not expect *Balaam*'s prodigy ſhould be every day repeated, that the *beaſt* ſhould be wiſer than the *rider*, and conſequently cannot wonder if the Succeſs vary with the Auditors.

AND 'tis to be fear'd, that this is the ſtate of moſt of us, that all the convincing *Logick*, that *demonſtration of the Spirit*, as S. *Paul* calls it. and all the perſwaſive *Rhetorick* of the Goſpel, find us ſo ſtupid and unconcern'd, that they can make no impreſſion: all the *avenues* are ſo blockt up, that they can find no way of approaching us. We are like the *Indian* Serpents *Philoſtratus* mentions, proof againſt all charms, but ſuch as with their glittering ſplendor aſſault our Eyes: nothing moves but what courts our Senſes, and what is not *groſs enough* to be ſeen, we think *too nice* to be conſider'd. The form and name of Chriſtianity Men find ready to their hands, and it coſts them no labour to put it on: but ſhould they be interrogated of the import and ſignificancy of it, I fear many would be at a loſs what to anſwer. Men call themſelves *Chriſtians*

as they do *French* or *Engliſh*, only becauſe they were born within ſuch a Territory, take up their *Religion* as a part of their *fate*, the temper of their *Climate*, the entail of their *Anceſtours*, or any thing moſt remote from their choice; the profeſſion of it deſcends to them by way of inheritance, and like young careleſs Heirs, they never are at the charge to ſurvey it, to inform themſelves either of the Iſſues or Revenues of it; what burdens it lays, or what advantages it promiſes. Every man ſees they are vaſt multitudes that have entered the *Baptiſmal* vow, and I fear no ſmall numbers of them, that weigh it as little when they ſhould *perform* it, as they did when they *made* it. Have no other notion of *Baptiſm*, but as a *cuſtom* of the place, or a *time* of feſtivity: conſider no farther ſignificancy in theſe ſpiritual bands, than they do in the Swadling-cloaths of their infancy, and can give no better account why they took on them *Chriſt's livery*, than why they wear ſuch *garments* as the *common faſhion* of their Country preſcribes them.

THIS is in many the effect of groſs ignorance, that really knows nothing that borders upon Religion: and where that is the *principle*, we cannot think it ſtrange to ſee their *practices* proportionable; this returns them into the ſtate of *Heatheniſm*, and while they walk in that darkneſs, it is no wonder if they often fall: the only matter of admiration is, that there ſhould be any ſuch darkneſs among us: that *the glorious light*, as S. *Paul* terms it, *of the Goſpel of Chriſt*, ſhould not

not long ere this have diſpell'd it out of our *Horizon*, and certainly, that it has not, muſt be owing to ſome very great guilt, ſo that concerning ſuch perſons, the Diſciples queſtion, *Joh. 9.* is very pertinent, *Who did ſin, this man or his Parents?* Where Men are ſo ignorant, it muſt neceſſarily infer their *Parents* negligence in infuſing, or their *own* ſtubborn perverſeneſs in reſiſting inſtruction: but 'tis more probable to conclude the former, ſince if Children were early inſtituted, knowledge would inſenſibly inſinuate it ſelf, before their years had arm'd them with obſtinacy enough to make head againſt it: but when by the Parents remiſſneſs the proper Seeds-time is loſt, the ſoil grows ſtiff and untractable; the *labour* of learning averts their Childhood, and the *ſhame* of it their Manhood, and ſo they grow old in their ignorance, are ready to *leave* this world before they come to *know* any thing of that which is to ſucceed it. This is a *common*, but certainly a moſt *deplorable* caſe; and as it loudly accuſes thoſe Parents, who thus wretchedly hazard their Childrens greateſt concernments, ſo certainly it reflects not very laudibly upon thoſe who by ſlighting that excellent Order of *Confirmation* in this Church, have beſides all other advantages of it, robb'd them of that happy reſerve, which the care of their *Spiritual* Parent had provided to repair the negligence of their *Natural*; but guilt has a miſerable kind of infinity, and leſſens not by being communicated; and therefore, though theſe unknowing perſons may with juſtice enough

*accuſe* others, yet can they never the more *abſolve* themſelves. Indeed they cannot tax others omiſſions towards them, without a tacit reproach of their own: for if it were a fault in the *Parent*, to let their Infancy want thoſe neceſſary infuſions, 'tis ſurely ſo in *themſelves*, to let their riper years continue in that deſtitution. And ſure 'tis not probable there could be a more irrational motive to the *former*, than that which prevails with the *latter*, to wit, the fear of ſhame, which certainly much more properly belongs to him that lies ſtupidly under his want, than he that induſtriouſly ſets to cure it: ſo that while they go thus prepoſterouſly to *avert* reproach, they invite it; nay, and do beſides betray one of their moſt important ſecrets, diſcover themſelves more ſollicitous about *appearances* than *realities*; to be *thought* knowing than to *be* ſo. A ſtrange kind of *ſpeculative* Hypocriſie, which yet leads to all the *practical* profaneneſs incident to thoſe, *who live without God in the World.*

BUT would God the uncatechiz'd were the only perſons we had to complain of in this matter: There is another ſort as *ignorant*, who have not that plea; who by a wretchleſs *Inconſideration*, have made a ſhift to *unlearn* what they had once been *taught*. That this is naturally very poſſible no Man can queſtion, that obſerves how *deſuetude* will rob a Man of any Science, or other habit. But in this caſe there is yet a farther concurrent towards it; Chriſt's parable tells us of *Fowls that devoured the Seed*, which himſelf interprets to be the

the *wicked one*, which catcheth away the word ſown in mens hearts: When that ſpiritual ſeed lies looſe and ſcatter'd upon the ſurface, and is not by deep and ſerious meditation harrowed, as it were, into the ground, it offers it ſelf a ready prey to the devourer, and God knows the *event* is too ready to atteſt the *truth* of the obſervation. For we do not ſee *many* whoſe childhoods have wanted nothing of Chriſtian nurture, that have had all advantages to the making them *wiſe unto ſalvation*, yet ſuffer their Manhood to wear out and obliterate all thoſe *rudiments* of their youth; and that not only out of their *practice*, but even out of their *memory* too: this (would we be patient to have the experiment made) would, I doubt not, be found true in divers, and they would appear leſs able to approve themſelves, not only to the *Confeſſor*, but even to the *Catechiſt* in their *adult age*, than they were in their *Minority*; as having ſcarce ever thought of the principles of their religion, ſince they conn'd them to avoid correction; and then 'tis no wonder if they paſs into the ſame *forgetfulneſs* with other the occurrences of that *ſlippery* age.

BUT if with ſome the *memory* have been ſo invincibly *faithful*, as not to have reſign'd its *depoſitum*; if it do happen obſtinately to retain thoſe early impreſſions which were made on it; yet alaſs! that alone will be of little avail: 'tis true, that is the ſtore-houſe, and 'tis good to have that well repleniſh'd; but if its *plenty* be only within it ſelf, uncommunicated; if the *gra-*

*nary*

*nary*, though never ſo full, be ſeal'd up, it gives no ſecurity againſt a *famine:* a Man's remembrance of his *Creed* may tell him there is a *God*, and that he is Almighty; but if his reaſon be ſo much aſleep, as not to infer from thence the neceſſity of reverencing and obeying him who is all-powerful to revenge our contempts, he may repeat the *Article* every day, and yet nevertheleſs *Atheiſtically.* In like manner he may go on to the Birth, Death, and Reſurrection of Chriſt; but if he weigh not the obligations to gratitude and duty, which devolve on him from thence, he may remember his *Birth*, and yet never be *regenerate:* his *Death*, and yet not *die to ſin*; and his *Reſurrection*, and yet *lie rotting* in his own *corruption*, and not riſe with him to *newneſs of life.* So he may proceed to his *coming to judge the quick and the dead:* but if he reflect not on his own particular concernment in it; if he conſider not that *for every the ſecreteſt thing*, Eccl. 11. *God will bring him*, as well as others, *to judgment*; he may talk of *Dooms-day* as Men do of ſuch *Aſſizes* as they have no Trial at, but it will never ſet him a trembling or give him the providence to anticipate his ſentence; ſo judge himſelf here, that he may not be judged of the Lord. And ſo proportionably in all the parts of our Chriſtian Faith: he that does not extract from them their proper and juſt inferences, ſhall never feel their efficacy. He has indeed in that excellent *Syſteme*, a moſt infallible *Catholicon*, againſt all his ſpiritual Maladies; but 'tis a Medicine, not a Charm;

Charm; to be taken, not laid by him; and if he fail in *application*, he will as certainly miſs of the *cure*: And this gives us one too clear a reaſon, why *ſo many*, in the moſt fatal ſence, *are ſick and weak among us, and fallen aſleep*, are firſt *lethargick*, and then ſtark *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*. Men do not by ſober conſideration ſuck out the virtue which would heal them: they look on the Creed as *Chriſt's badge*, and ſo long as they bear that, they think none muſt queſtion their *Chriſtianity*: whereas 'tis indeed more properly his Military *Symbolum*, or recognition of the Cauſe, and General they fight for; an engaging them to all the obedience, fidelity and conſtancy of reſolute ſouldiers: and to this purpoſe it is that we *ſtand up* at the recital of the Creed, as owning our Baptiſmal promiſe, to *fight* manfully under our Saviour's *Banner* againſt *Sin*, the *World*, and the *Devil*; and if we do not thus, 'tis not material what profeſſions we make, we are the ſame deſerters whether we *ſtay* in our own Camp, or *run* over to the enemies; *throw away* our Arms, or *not uſe* them; *renounce* our Chriſtian faith, or not *improve* it. Sloth is as miſchievous in war as treachery or cowardice, and he that keeps his *ſword* in the *ſheath*, is as unformidable an enemy, as he that brings *none* into the *field*.

AND how many ſuch inſignificant *combatants* are there in the Chriſtian Camp, that only lend their *Names* to fill up the *Muſter-roll*, but never dream of going upon *ſervice*? 'Tis certain

certain there are as many ſuch, as there are careleſs unconſidering Profeſſors: and theſe, 'tis to be fear'd, make ſo great a number, that were the Church put to eſtimate her *forces*, and examine what effectively her *ſtrength* is, ſhe would find the deceit of *falſe muſters* as great among the *Spiritual* as the *Civil* Souldiery. It is indeed a moſt amazing thing to ſee, that that which is the one great and important intereſt of all Men, ſhould of all other things meet with the leaſt regard. If we make a propoſal of worldly profit though incumber'd with many difficulties, and liable to many uncertainties, we ſhall not only have an attentive hearing, but active care and diligent purſuit of the deſign; it will be driven to the laſt glimpſe of hope; and if the firſt attempt miſcarry, the next occaſion is laid hold of; but here, where the *prize* is ſo rich, the *conditions* ſo eaſie, the *acqueſt* ſo certain, yet (as if theſe were deterring, averting qualities) we cannot be got to take the matter into our deliberation. Alaſs what ſtupid folly has poſſeſt Men? And by what *meaſures* do they make their *eſtimates*? How are their precious Souls become ſo vile in their eyes that they are the only part of them, which they think below their regard? In an *Epidemick* diſeaſe every Man looks out for *Antidote* or Medicine for his own peculiar, and does not acquieſce in that ſilly confidence that he ſhall die as well as other Men: yet in this greater danger that is their avowed comfort, and keeps them as chearful as if they had the moſt ſolid grounds of

ſecurity

ſecurity. Alaſs, can numbers *out face* damnation, or do Men hope that by going in troops to Hell they ſhall *maſter* the native inhabitants, *ſubdue* thoſe legions of tormentors, and become *conquerors* inſtead of *ſufferers*? This is ſure too wild an imagination for any to entertain, yet what more ſober one can any pretend, in favour of ſo ſtupendous an improvidence?

BUT 'twill be much more ſeaſonable to *reform* than *Apologize* or *Rhetoricate*; and therefore 'twill import thoſe Men, who like the inhabitants of *Laiſh*, dwell *careleſs*, quiet, and ſecure, to look about them; to enter into *ſerious* conſultation how they may avert that ruine which waits upon ſuch a ſupine temper; not to ſuffer themſelves to periſh in the midſt of ſuch poſſibilities, nay ſollicitations to be ſaved: but at laſt afford an audience to that Embaſſie which is ſent them from Heaven. Ponder well thoſe *eaſie* terms of reconciliation which are propoſ'd: the *ineſtimable advantages* conſequent to the embracing that amity; and the as *ineſtimable detriment* of refuſing it: In a word, not to pleaſe themſelves with the *empty title*, but to penetrate the *full purport* and ſignificancy of their Chriſtianity, and when they have done this ſoberly and attentively; having removed this firſt and moſt general obſtruction to piety, they will find themſelves aſſaulted by ſuch force of *reaſon*, that they muſt either be very ill *Logicians*, or very good *Chriſtians*.

CHAP.

## CHAP. IV.

*A ſurvey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Partial Con ſideration.*

NEXT to the *ſtupid* and merely vege table ſtate of total incogitancy, we ma rank that *partial* and piece-meal con ſideration, by which Chriſtianity is mutilate and deform'd, depriv'd of all its force to attra and ſubdue Mens hearts: for as in *artificia* Movements, there is ſuch a dependence of on part upon another, that the ſubſtracting of an one deſtroys the whole frame: ſo in this *ſpiritua* Machin deſign'd to raiſe our dull mortality t Heaven, the divine wiſdom of its maker ha combin'd its ſeveral parts, that he who ſever ruines; he that applies it not in its unite ſtrength, will find no aid from its unjoynte ſcattered particles. S. *Paul* tells us, 1 *Cor.* 12 that in the natural body, the making it all Ey or Hand, the reducing the many members to one is deſtructive to its being: (if they were all on member, where were the body? *verſe* 20.) and w in reaſon muſt expect the ſame event will fo low here. If we advance one part of our Chri ſtian Faith to the annihilation of the reſt, 'ti impoſſible that ſhould ſupply the place of th whole; but the more that member is ſwol above its native ſize, the more *unwieldy*, not th more *ſtrong* it grows; and loſes that active vigor

which is receiv'd by a ſocial communication with the other parts.

'T I S God's charge againſt the *Prieſts*, *Mal.* 2. that *they have been partial in the Law*, נשאים פנים lifters up of faces in it; preferr'd *ſome* more agreeable parts, and diſcountenanc'd *others*; were not *only* judges of the Law, but *unjuſt* judges too. And I fear the indictment may now run more generally againſt the People alſo; that they have been partial in the Goſpel; culled and choſen out thoſe ſofter and more gentle dictates which ſhould leſs grate and diſturb them: like well the *Oil* that makes them have a chearful countenance, but are not ſo forward to deal with the *Wine* which ſhould ſearch and cleanſe their ſores. We make all our addreſſes to the *promiſes*, hug and careſs them, and in the interim, let the *commands* ſtand by neglected. A *divinity* indeed fitly apportion'd to the devotion of *theſe times*, which loves to make an *offering to God of that which coſts them nothing*, and yields a preference to that way of *worſhip* which aſſures Salvation *beſt cheap*, and at the *eaſieſt terms*; but would Men conſider, they would find, that the *commands* are the ſupreme and moſt eminent part of the *Evangelical Covenant*, the *promiſes* come but as *handmaid* and attendants: an honourable retinue to invite the more reſpectful entertainment, and it ſhould be remembred that of this *ſort* are the *threatnings* too; and therefore they have ſurely an equal right to our regard, eſpecially when many of them have the acceſſion

of

of God's *Oath*, to bind and ſtrengthen their *performance*. And what a ſcandalous and abſurd partiality is this, that when the precepts come with this ſolemnity, the more to command our reverence, we ſingle out this one part of the Train and pay our homage unto it: lay hold on the *Promiſes*, not thoſe that ſpeak *damnation* to impenitence, but the other half of them which give *aſſurances* of favour. And like the *Benjamites* to the daughters of *Shiloh*, run away with them, poſſeſs our ſelves of theſe by rape, in ſpight of all the incapacities we lie under; though God has ſworn, that no diſobedient provoker ſhall enter into his reſt.

THAT this is really the caſe of many is more than probable; for by what other artifice is it poſſible for them to reconcile their large hopes, with their no purifying; their confident expectations of Heaven, with their greedy rapacious purſuits of Earth; their ſecure dependence on the Blood of their *Saviour*, with their remorſeleſs effuſions of that of their *Brethren*? Did they conſider the inſeparable *connexion* between the Precepts and the Promiſes, 'twere hard for them to be ſo *wicked*, but impoſſible to be ſo *ſanguine*. Did the *unclean* perſon believe that none but *the pure in heart ſhall ſee God*, if he could be ſo much *Swine* as ſtill to chuſe the *mire*; yet ſure he could not expect to be rapt from thence into Heaven. Did the *Drunkard* conſider the ſentence of the Apoſtle *excluding all ſuch from the Kingdom of God*, 1 *Cor.* 6. 10. if he can be content ſo ſadly

to

to over-buy his sin; as to pay that Kingdom for his shot; yet certainly even he cannot be sot enough to expect the possession of what he has so sold, or hope that from one of his drunken *trances*, he shall *awake* to *glory*. Did the covetous Extortioner observe that he is involv'd in the same sentence, remember that such Violents shall take not *heaven*, but *hell, by force*; if the terrors of the Lord could not have force enough to melt his bowels, to unclutch his griping hand, or disseize him of his prey: yet sure it must discourage him from grasping of Heaven too, from hoping to defraud *God* as he has done *men*, and striking himself into an Estate in the land of the living: and in like manner all other hoping sinners if they would ruine, yet must cease from flattering themselves, must chuse *damnation* bare-fac'd, and not fancy that their posting on in the broad way shall ever bring them to life. And sure this discovery of their estate, were a very good step to the curing it, for though 'tis possible some few may be of so sturdy an impiety, as to chuse their sin with all its consequents, yet sure all sinners are not of that strong complexion, and therefore Satan is put to his wiles and artifices, is fain to *hoodwink* those that are apt to start; and disguises the danger when he sees the true appearance of it will terrifie and avert. This was the old policy with our *first* Parents; he dazles their eyes with the *glorious*, but *abusive* proposal of becoming like *Gods*, that they might not discern how near they were approaching to become like *Devils*: and

this] under the pretence of confidence and friendſhip, diſcovering as it were a ſecret to them, that God envied them that promotion, which his greater kindneſs was ſollicitous to procure for them. And as if the ruine of mankind in *Maſſa*, had been too ſlight a *Trophy* for that one ſtratagem, he repeats it again to the individuals, perſuades men that the path of obedience which God has chalk'd out is ſtrait and narrow, rugged and incumbred; that there is a ſhorter cut, an eaſier paſſage to life: that they may be led into *Canaan* a nearer way, ſtep into it immediately from the fleſh-pots of *Egypt*, and eſcape the tedious weary March in the *Wilderneſs*: never ſo much as call at Mount *Sinai*, or be affrighted with the *Thunders of the Law* In a word, they need not *work out their Salvation*, but be they never ſo ſlothful *they may inherit the Promiſes*, Heb. 6. 12. This is his own grand *Concluſion*, though he has ſeveral *mediums* to infer it by: wherewith, as with ſo many *tools* and *Engines*, he furniſhes men for the *filing* or breaking of that ſacred Link between Duty and Reward; and of theſe he has great variety fitted to the hands, and skill of thoſe that manage them. I ſhall not undertake to ranſack his *work-houſe*, or give an inventory of his *Utenſils*, but ſhall rather in general beſeech all thoſe, who have made this unhappy ſeparation, to remember from whoſe *Forge* they took their *Inſtruments* and then conſider whether his officiouſneſs in ſupplying them, can argue any thing but that 'tis his work they are about. Can any think that he

he, whoſe eternal paſtime it will be to torment men, can really be ſollicitous of their eaſe; that he would chuſe out for them the *pleaſanteſt paths*, were it not that he knows they lead to the *chambers of death*? When *Chriſt* whoſe ſole buſineſs it was to ſave mens ſouls, has preſcribed us a *courſe* which ſhall aſſuredly conduct us unto *happineſs*, what can it be but Phrenſie to reſort to *Abaddon*, the deſtroyer for an eaſier method, or expect more gentleneſs and compaſſion from the *roaring Lyon* than from the *Lamb of God*.?

NAY indeed this is not only to attribute to him more tenderneſs, but fidelity too: to believe him in oppoſition to all the expreſs affirmations of God; and when he who is truth it ſelf has told us, *that except we repent, we ſhall all periſh*, *Luke* 13. 5. and that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord*, Heb. 12. 14. to disbelieve this only upon his bare credit, who was a Lyar from the beginning: This indeed is a prodigious compoſition of blaſphemy and folly; a ſtrange contumely to *God*, but fatal treachery to our ſelves: For alas! Satan entertains us all this while but with a trick of *Legerdemain*, and as *Juglers*, make us believe we have cut the ſtring, which yet preſently after they ſhew us whole; ſo he perſwades us he has thus ſever'd the *Condition* from the *Promiſes*, when to our grief it will finally appear their union was inviolable. 'Tis not all our vain confidence that can reverſe the immutable divine Law; we may 'tis true, delude our ſelves, keep up our Spirits high; in a ſecure jollity *eat*

*and drink, and riſe up to play*, and ſo not only loyter, but revel out our *day*, till the *night* overtake us *wherein no man can work*; but he ſhall never be able to propagate the deceit, where only it could avail us; to perſwade God to pay the *hire* to thoſe that have been no labourers, or give the *prize* to any who have not run to obtain it. Let every man therefore in a juſt tenderneſs to his own Soul ſtrictly examine his hopes, try, not how high they towre, but how deep they are founded; whether on the *ſand* or on the *rock*; the flattering deluſions of Satan and the dreams of his own Phancy, or on the Promiſes of God: for though all pretend to build on the latter, yet God knows, a multitude of fooliſh *Architects* there are, which miſtake their ground, take that for aſſurance that is not: And this truly is a thing deſerves to be ſoberly conſider'd; they that moſt greedily catch at the Promiſes, do often embrace a *cloud* inſtead of the *Deity* which they ſo eargerly graſp, and thereby think to enjoy. But *faithful* obedience, and not inſolent hopes commend us unto God. The Goſpel indeed deſcribes to us great and ineſtimable *felicities*, but he that can think this gives him *Title* to them may as well pretend to the whole *World*, becauſe he has the *Map* of it in his Houſe: for though it mentions them to all, yet it promiſes them to none but the obedient. And thoſe *Iſraelites* which fled from the ſight of *Goliah*, 1 *Sam.* 17. 24. might as reaſonably challenge the reward propos'd to the Victor, as men can pretend to

to enter into life without keeping the Commandments: This then is the one *Criterion*, by which a man may judge of his hopes; if they be but proportionable to his obedience, they are then regular, and ſuch as will not make him aſham'd, but prove incentives and engagements to every good work. Let him obey as much as he can, and then he need not deny himſelf the comfort of hoping as much as he can too. But if his *hopes* exceed this meaſure, and ſquare themſelves only by his *wiſhes*; if he look for Heaven, not becauſe he is *qualified* for it, but becauſe he wants or covets it; this is rather to dream than hope, and ſuch *whimſies* will as ſoon inveſt the beggar in *wealth*, the defam'd in *honour*, the ſick in *health*, or any man in any thing he has but a mind to, as compaſs *Heaven* for the bold *Fiduciary*.

IT is indeed like thoſe *Lunacies* wherein mens fancies adopt them Heirs to thoſe Kingdoms they know nothing of, more than the names; and ſure the Analogy holds as well in the *cure* as the *diſeaſe*: let theſe Patients a while be kept dark, taken from the dazling contemplations of their imaginary privileges, to the ſad reflection on their ſins: and as God expoſtulates with *Iſrael*, *Ezek.* 33. 26. *Ye ſtand upon your ſword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every man his neighbours wife, and ſhall ye poſſeſs the land?* So let them recite to themſelves the Catalogues of their impieties, and then ask their own hearts, whether theſe be the qualifications of thoſe that ſhall reſt in God's holy Hill? Whether theſe marks of the

*Beaſt* can ever rank them among the followers of the *Lamb*? And let theſe Conſiderations be preſt home, reiterated ſo often, till by repeated ſtrokes they have made good the other part of the method, made their Souls bleed, and by that Spiritual *Phlebotomy*, temper'd their ſwelling veins, allayed the over-ſanguineneſs of their Conſtitution: and then there remains but one thing more to compleat the courſe, and that is bringing them into the *Work-houſe*, ſetting them really to *work out* their *ſalvation with fear and trembling*, which they had ſo near played away by confidence and preſumption: And when they have done thus, they have verified their hopes, and then may ſafely reaſſume them: They are return'd again with advantage to their firſt point, and are that in *ſoberneſs* and *reality*, which they then were only in *fiction* and *imagination*.

AND now would God men would once be content to be thus diſabus'd; that they would not be ſo in love with deceit, as in the Prophet's phraſe, *Jer.* 8. 5. to *hold it faſt*: that they would not chuſe *Chimæra*'s and *phantaſtick* Images before real and ſubſtantial Felicities; and prefer that hope which will be ſure to *ſhipwrack* them, before that which will be *an Anchor of the Soul, ſure and ſtedfaſt*, *Heb.* 6. 19. and if this ſo reaſonable a propoſal may be embrac'd; if the World ſhould, as the *Spaniard* ſaid, but *riſe wiſe one morning*, what a deal of dead merchandize would Satan have upon his hands? Many of thoſe they call the comfortable Doctrines would want vent, which

are

are now the Staple commodity of his Kingdom. What thoſe are, 'tis no part of my deſign to examine, it will be every mans particular concern to do it for himſelf; which he may do by this one Teſt; Whether they more animate men to *hope* well, than to *live* well? Whether they bring *Alexander*'s Sword to cut aſunder the *Gordian* knot, to ſever between the Promiſe and the Condition? Or the Sword of the *Spirit* to ſubdue all to the obedience of Chriſt? If the former, we may expect the fruits of ſuch will be all that licentiouſneſs which S. *Paul* deſcribes, as *the works of the fleſh*, *Gal.* 5. 19. it being not to be imagin'd, that the *precepts* of the Goſpel, which they divide from the *promiſes* only, that they might fall off, ſhall then be *voluntarily* taken up in mere good nature and heroick Generoſity; that thoſe who are ſo induſtrious to avoid the neceſſity of *Chriſtian practice*, will make it their *free will offering*. If there ſhould happen to be ſome few of ſo ingenuous a gratitude; yet 'tis certain that is not our common mould; few men will be better than they think their intereſts bids them be, and therefore ſuch Principles are dangerous Seminaries of *Libertiniſm*: and 'tis mens very important concernment not to admit them. Let not then their chearful *aſpect* recommend them to our *embraces*; men may be kill'd with too much *Cordial*; that which ſeems to refreſh the *Spirits* may enflame the *Blood*, and though *cold poiſons* have gotten the fame of being the moſt *malignant*, yet there are *hot* that are as infallibly *mortiferous*. Let it be

our care in oppoſition to both, to keep our ſelves in that moderate, equal temper, which belongs to *healthy* Souls: and ſince that is the vitalleſt heat which is gotten by exerciſe, ſet to our buſineſs, employ our ſelves diligently in all thoſe duties the Goſpel exacts, and then we ſhall not want ſuch an hope as may warm our hearts, keep us in a chearful expectation, till we come to the glorious fruition of that *Eternal Salvation which God has promiſed to all them, and only them that obey him.* And till we do thus, till we conſider as well what we are to *do*, as what we are to *receive*, there will be no hope of reſtoring Chriſtianity to its native vigour: we ſhall make it evaporate all its ſtrength in *uninſignificant hopes*, convert it into Air, to bear up our Bubbles inſtead of that firm ground whereon we ſhould build *vertue* here, and *glory* hereafter.

## CHAP. V.

### *A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Carnal Conſideration.*

AFTER the diſadvantages of *Partial* Conſideration, may fairly be ſubjoyn'd the ills of that advertency, which is impregnated by *ſenſuality* and ſloth, and makes pretence unto right *reaſon*, but tends indeed as much as any thing to the fruſtrating the deſign, and enfeebling

feebling the force of our Religion: such close *reserves* of deceit and malice have men to their own Souls, that when they quit one strong hold of Satans, 'tis only to retreat to another. When they are not so brisk and Aerial, as lightly to skip over those precepts that lie in their way, they are so gross and unwary as to fall at them? if they may not pass for Straws and Chaff, such as every blast of vain confidence may blow away, they shall then be improved into Heaps and Mountains, become stones of stumbling and rocks of offence; and when they are call'd upon to consider them; they do it in so perverse a manner as if they meant to revenge themselves on that unwelcome importunity: Their *consideration* is worse than *neglect*. They look into them insidiously, not as *Disciples*, but as *Spies*; not to weigh the obligeingness, but to quarrel the unreasonableness or difficulty of the injunctions; not to direct their *practice*, but excuse their *prevarications*.

FROM this unsincere kind of inspection it is, that the *precepts* have got so formidable appearance with many, that they have fallen under such heavy prejudices, as to resolve them intolerable yokes, insuperable tasks: that this *Canaan* is a land that eats up its Inhabitants, wherein there is so little of *enjoyment*, that it scarce affords a *being*. Men count a life under such restraints, so joyless and uneasie, that it differs from death only, by being more *passive*. They think *Zeal* like a *Hectick Fever*, in a slow, but certainly fatal *Fire* exhausts and consumes the *Spirits*. Mortification

fication and *ſelf-denial* macerate and decay the *body*; and *liberality* diſſipates and waſtes the *Eſtate*: And with theſe Apparitions, which themſelves have conjur'd up, men run frighted from duty, reſolve the burthen is inſupportable, or at leaſt grievous to be born, and therefore as our Saviour ſays of the *Phariſees*, *will not touch it*, no not ſo much as *with one of their fingers*, *Matt.* 23. 4. never make any attempt to try what indeed they are; but take their meaſures from their own, or perhaps other mens prejudicate opinions and thence take out an *Authentick Record* and *Patent* for ſloth, fancy the journey too long for them, and therefore ſit ſtill; firſt call Chriſt's Commandments *grievous*, and then improve that ſlander into a *manumiſſion*; abſolve themſelves from obeying them. And unleſs they may have the Gate to Life cut wider, made capacious enough to receive them with all their Luſts about them; will never eſſay to enter it.

BUT if the *Prince of Darkneſs* have enacted it a Law, that difficulty ſhall paſs for excuſe, yet if real uneaſineſs may be admitted to be as deterring as imaginary ones, his own decree will retort the moſt ruinouſly on himſelf, and men may plead it as their diſcharge from all thoſe baſe drudgeries, thoſe tyrannous impoſitions wherewith he loads them. The *Drunkard* may experimentally tell him the *pain* of an aking head, of an overcharged ſtomach, the *ruine* of a waſted Eſtate, and claim a diſpenſation from purſuing that uneaſie and coſtly ſin. The *Wanton* may bring

bring his macerated body like the *Levite*'s Concubine, *Judg.* 19. and urge it as an evidence how cruel a Maſter he ſerves; and from thence emancipate and free himſelf: And indeed every ſin carries in it ſo much of viſible toil, or ſecret ſmart, as would by force of this rule ſupplant and undermine it ſelf; and ſure *Satan* would never have arm'd men with ſo dangerous a weapon, had he not diſcern'd them ſo in love with ſlavery, as ſecures him it ſhould never be us'd againſt him; for if it ſhould, nothing could give him a more mortal wound, more irrecoverably ſhake his Kingdom. Nor would only that infernal region feel the force of that deſtructive Principle; it would make as ſtrange confuſions in ſecular Regiments.

FOR if ſuch *pleas* as theſe may be admitted, they will eaſily cancel all Humane, as well as Divine Laws, and every Malefactor will transfer his guilt on the ſeverity of the *Legiſlator*: The *Thief* may ſay it is too great a difficulty for him to reſiſt the temptation of an apt opportunity; a rich prize, that his fingers are too ſlippery even for himſelf, and he cannot reſtrain them, and then quarrel the ſtrictneſs of the Law, which has rais'd ſo high a fence about mens properties, that he who climbs it, muſt endanger his *neck*. The *Rebel* may complain that the bands of *Allegiance* are too ſtrait, the yoke ſits too cloſe, galls and frets his tender fleſh, exclaim loudly at the *Tyranny* of thoſe that laid it on, and in that out-cry drown the noiſe of his own Treaſon. And ſo every other tranſgreſſor may accuſe the rule, as acceſſary

ceſſary to his ſwervings, till at laſt the *Laws* be made the only *Criminals*.

I LEAVE every man to judge both of the equity and conſequences of ſuch diſcourſings in *Civil* matters, and ſhall only deſire he will apply them to *Spiritual* alſo, where certainly they are neither more juſt, nor leſs ruinous: and whilſt ſuch abſurd *pretences* as theſe paſs current, no wonder if *Chriſtianity* languiſh and grow impotent, want ſtrength to impreſs it ſelf on the lives of its *profeſſors*. The moſt infallible Receipt can work no cure on him, who upon the ſuſpicion of its bitterneſs, refuſes to taſte it. The moſt excellent *Laws* muſt loſe their regulating power, where the execution of them is obſtructed; and we may as reaſonably look for the efficacy of *Chriſtianity* among thoſe who never heard the *name*, as among thoſe, who owning the *name*, do yet diſclaim its *precepts*; and ſo all thoſe interpretatively do, who by accuſing them of too great rigour, avert both themſelves and others from their Obedience.

THAT the Charge is ſcandalouſly unjuſt will appear to any, who ſhall allow themſelves the juſt means of information; but alas, the way of *Proceſs* men take in this affair, is ſo inequitable as certainly preſages the partiality of the *ſentence*: What perſon ever was there ſo innocent, ſo excellent, who if arraign'd at the *Tribunal* of his mortal enemy, could be acquitted? *Chriſt* himſelf ſhall be pronounced a *Blaſphemer*, when a *Caiphas* is to examine him: and no wonder if his *precepts* find pro-

proportionable dealing; if they be decried as *impoſſible*, *tyrannical*, perhaps *ridiculous* too, where the ſcanning of them is referred to thoſe, whoſe intereſt it is to defame them. Men enthrone their *luſts*, ſet them up in the *judgment ſeat*, and none can expect they ſhould paſs ſuch a ſentence, as ſhall include their own *condemnation*: If they own the *commandment* to be *holy*, *juſt* and *good*, they muſt tacitly accuſe themſelves to be *impure*, *unjuſt* and *wicked*, and as ſuch to be conſign'd to wrath and judgment.

HERE then we have the true account how Chriſt's *commands*, which are in themſelves ſo *far* from grievous, have gotten ſo unkind a *reputation* among us; this is ſo direct a courſe for it, that we may ceaſe our *wonder* though not our *grief* to ſee it; for we behold them ſtand to the award of thoſe with whom they have a profeſt enmity: the *Gaol* gives ſentence on the Bench; the *Bar* arraigns the judgment-ſeat. Certainly when that Law which is *Spiritual*, is ſubmitted to the arbitrament of groſs *carnality*, the Law of Liberty is taxed and rated by thoſe worſt *bond-men who are ſold under ſin*; 'tis impoſſible to find any fairer treatment. That which comes on purpoſe to dethrone ſin, diſpoſſeſſes it of the Empire it has uſurpt, will certainly be entertain'd with the ſame *exclamation* the Devils us'd to Chriſt, *Why art thou come to torment us?* But as if this *general Antipathy* were not enough to aſcertain the rejection of Chriſt's command; as if the *National* feud, as I may call it, between Heaven and Hell were not thought irrecon-

irreconcileable enough, men offer yet harder meaſure, call in the aid of perſonal quarrels, and when the Precepts come to be conſidered, refer each of them ſingle to that particular Vice to which it has the directeſt contrariety.

THUS when Chriſt's command of *meekneſs and forgiveneſs, of loving Enemies, and turning the cheek, bearing the croſs*, or *ſelf-denial* calls for audience, they conſult (as *Rehoboam* did with his young hot-ſpurs) with their anger and malice, their rancour and revenge, and they ſoon give their Verdict, that to be *meek* is to be *ſervile*, a temper fit only for the abject. That to forgive enemies is a principle of *cowardice* that would emaſculate the world; to love them, a piece of Spaniel-like fawning; but to turn the Cheek, not only to hazard, but invite new injuries by owning them as benefits; paying bleſſing for curſes, kindneſs and good turns for hatred, is ſuch a ridiculous patience, as muſt expoſe to the inſolence of many, and the ſcorn and deriſion of all men. And then the reſolution is ready, they will be no ſuch fools for Chriſt's ſake. So when the precept of humility and lowlineſs comes to be conſidered, their *Pride* is deputed to hear its plea, and then tho it bring the authority of Chriſt's *example* as well as his *command*, it will be judg'd invalid: *Chriſt* indeed *took upon him the form of a Servant*, and to that, humility was a proportionable *Adjunct*: but what is that to them whoſe aſpiring humour abhors ſubjection, 'tis not calculated for their *Meridian*, they are of another manner

ner of Spirit, and would not have it embaſed by the admiſſion of ſo mean a quality; and though Chriſt hath put *poverty of Spirit* among his Beatitudes, they reſolve he ſhall not enſnare them with that *artifice*; they will not take his meaſures of Felicity, or reſign that pleaſure they have in valuing themſelves, for any thing he propoſes in exchange. In like manner the Precepts of Temperance, Sobriety and Chaſtity, are not permitted to the Judgment of ſober *Reaſon*, nay, nor of mere natural deſire, but to appetites vitiated and inflam'd by radicated *habits*; and then the *Glutton* thinks to eat moderately, is to be ſtarv'd and will as ſoon *put a knife*, Prov. 23. *to his throat* in the vulgar ſenſe of cutting it, as in *Solomon*'s notion of reſtraining his exceſs. Thus the *Drunkard* with his falſe thirſts looks on Sobriety as a kind of Hell, where he ſhall want *a drop to cool his tongue*, and thinks the abandoning his debaucht jollities is an implicit adieu to all the comforts of life. The *Unclean* perſon when his blood is high, ſcoffs at Chaſtity as a religious kind of impotence, and only ſo far conſiders the *precept of pulling out the Eye*, as to infer that it were as eaſie literally to part with it, as to reſtrain its luſtful rage; not look at all as not look to luſt. And proportionably it fares with Charity and Bounty, which though our Saviour recommend, *Mammon* arraigns of robbery, and ſtigmatizes as a *Thief* that picks the Purſe, and rifles Coffers, But amidſt all theſe, *the taking up the Croſs, ſuffering for righteouſneſs ſake*, and *the doctrine of ſelf-denial*,

*nial*, fall under the heavieſt prejudice. Theſe are oppos'd not by ſome one ſingle vice, but the confederate arms of all; even thoſe, whoſe intereſts are ſlatly oppoſite do here unite: *Herod* and *Pilate*, *Sadduces* and *Phariſees* accord againſt Chriſt, and all are freely ſuffer'd, nay invited to exhibit their complaints againſt theſe *Mandates*. *Covetouſneſs* cries out that this is the moſt ruinous prodigality, caſts away an Eſtate in a lump, and lays all open to forfeiture and confiſcation: and *Prodigality* takes it as ill to be foreſtall'd, and have nothing left for it to diſſipate. *Prophaneneſs* avows a contempt of it as a folly, and moſt open madneſs to part with real pleaſure for an empty name, or profit for the *Bankrupt thing* call'd Conſcience. And *Hypocriſie* has a more ſecret hatred of it, as its detector, that which will bring it to a Teſt which it cannot paſs. *Malice* puts in a *Caveat*, that this is to gratifie enemies, and loſe the ſatisfactions of revenge: And *Self-love* puts in another, that is to deſtroy ones ſelf. In ſhort every limb of the body of ſin diſcharges a blow at this innocent and divine Sanction; as if they meant it ſhould exemplifie its own doctrine by aſſuming that paſſive temper it recommends.

BUT alas, who can expect any more upright verdicts from ſuch *packt*, ſuch *corrupt* Juries, and why may not Chriſt be permitted to claim the common benefit of our Laws, to make his challenge and exceptions againſt this ſo incompetent *impanel*? 'Tis the counſel of the Wiſe man, not to

to advise in common affairs with those whose tempers may be suppos'd to bias them, *Consult not*, says he, *with a Coward in matters of War, nor with a sluggard of much business*, *Ecclus.* 37.11. and sure if they be ill *Counsellors*, they must be worse *Judges*: but why then do we set Pride to judge of Humility, Lust of Purity, Covetousness of Liberality; and make our *vices* the *arbitrators* of those *Laws* which should restrain them? This is such a gross *injustice* as common *humanity* abhors; we deal by other measures with Men, the most notorious and flagitious Criminals, and reserve this way of process for those things only wherein our God may be concern'd. 'Tis a severe exprobration of a profane people, *Malach.* 1. 8. where God accuses them for treating *him* with less reverence than they would do a *mortal* Prince. *Offer it* now *to thy Prince*: but alas! we shall force him to descend far lower in his expostulation, so far we are from paying him the *duty* and regard belonging to a *Prince*, that we yield him not the rights of *common* Men; force him to stand to those measures which we think too inequitable to press upon a Murderer, a Thief, or Rebel at the Bar.

BUT this waving of common rules is a plain confession that we need more indulgence, than those will allow: When Mens *lusts* thus usurp the *Tribunal*, and judge in their own cause, 'tis a palpable discovery they dare not remit themselves to any more equal determination. And indeed in this point of their Interest, they pass a

right judgment: for 'tis certain were the *caſe* referr'd to any competent Judge, indeed to *any* but *themſelves*, they would inevitably be caſt; and ſure 'tis high time that ſome ſhould aſſiſt *oppreſt vertue* in its appeal; find it out ſome *Court* of *equity* where its plea may be heard: and we need not travel *far* for that purpoſe, every Man may do it in his own *breaſt*, where in his little *Common-wealth* he ſhall find a *Court* of God's erecting: let him but draw the Cauſe *thither*, diſcuſs the matter in his own Conſcience; and he will ſoon find the former unrighteous ſentences revers'd: let him but ſeriouſly reflect on his *violations* of thoſe Sacred Precepts of Chriſt; and obſerve what a *ſting* and ſecret remorſe every ſuch *breach* leaves within him: and that will be a competent atteſtation of the *equity* and obligingneſs of thoſe Mandates: for from whence elſe can the regret ariſe? Thoſe things that are either impoſſible in their nature, or unconcerning to us cannot beget it. No man accuſes himſelf for not flying in the *air*, or walking upon the *water*; nor owns himſelf *guilty* in the non-obſervance of any *Laws*, but ſuch as have power to oblige him: and therefore theſe cloſe pangs and checks of *Conſcience* are an irrefragable evidence, that Men do *inwardly* aſſent to the juſtice and authority of thoſe divine *rules*, which their *actions*, yea often their *words* too, do moſt oppugn.

BUT over and above the throes and after-pains of Conſcience, when ſin is brought forth, the ſelf-accuſation of the *Criminal*, when none be-

ſide

ſide controuls, nay many flatter and commend; I ſay beyond this ſecondary and reflext *Apologie* for Chriſt's Law owed to the foregoing prevarication of it; there is an early and immediate *verdict* paſt in its behalf, in the eſteem and liking which thoſe documents command, where e'er they paſs: creating an aſſent and veneration not only when obey'd, but from profeſt deſpiſers; who cannot chuſe but think well of that vertue they deſert, and the neceſſity of their affairs compel them to ſpeak ill of. An event *viſible* in the condemnation of our Saviour, where the *Judge* who *gave ſentence* againſt him, at the ſame moment *waſht his hands*, and openly profeſt, *he found no fault in him.*

AND indeed this very reflection on the *Author* of theſe Precepts, if well conſider'd, would ſuperſede all other Arguments. The *Mandates* of the Goſpel on this one ſcore, that they are Chriſts, are certainly both *pure* in themſelves, and *poſſible* to us: and ſo moſt worthy not only of all *obedience*, but all *love* too. He who is our *Lord* upon both the titles of *Creation* and *Redemption*, may certainly with all juſtice impoſe what Laws he pleaſes on us. Yet he, who laid down his life for the redemption of the tranſgreſſions which were under the firſt Teſtament, cannot be imagin'd ſo inconſiderate of our frailty which himſelf had ſmarted for, as to introduce another of equal rigour, or be ſo prodigal of his blood, as to pour it out for thoſe who by a new ſet of impoſſible commands ſhould infalli-

bly reforfeit themſelves again: and if this cannot be ſuppos'd, the contrary may be concluded, that he hath ſo far condeſcended to our imbecillity, as not to *preſcribe* us any thing which he either finds or makes us not able to *perform.* 'Tis true indeed, his *Laws* are above the reach of our corrupt and debaſed *nature*; and they were unfit to be his, were they not ſo: but when he by his Grace offers to elevate and refine this Nature, bring it up to the pitch and purity of thoſe Laws, this is a far greater mercy than if he had deſcended to our corruption; ſo he might have contaminated himſelf, given laws unworthy of him: But alaſs! what advantage would it be to us, to have the *Blaſphemy* mention'd, *Pſal.* 50. ſo verified, to have our *God* in this ſence, *ſuch a one as our ſelves?* But by this other *Method* he purifies, and exalts us; puts us into a capacity of being *like unto him,* in which is ſumm'd up at once, all both *virtue* and *felicity.*

AND on this glorious *end,* every particular *command* of his has a direct aſpect, every one of them tending to *re-impreſs* on us ſome part of that divine *image* which was raz'd out by the *firſt ſin:* and this, one would thing enough to recommend them to our higheſt value. Certainly, if *Conſcience* may be *Judge,* it will be ſo: there being in this caſe no middle between *devout* reverence, and horrid blaſphemy; for he that deſpiſes ſuch an *aſſimilation,* muſt neceſſarily alſo deſpiſe *him* who is ſo *reſembled:* he who thinks meekneſs, purity, humility, *&c. unamiable qualities*

*lities*, can have *little eſteem* for him, in whom they are *tranſcendently eminent*, but will take the Prophet at his word, and ſay, *There is no form nor comelineſs in him, Eſ.* 53. But this ſure can never be the verdict of Conſcience; he that can thus *pronounce*, muſt be ſuppos'd to have ſuppreſt and *ſilenc'd* that. It being one of the moſt indelible *notions* there, that *all that is in God, is ſublimely excellent.* But becauſe 'tis indeed too poſſible that Conſcience may be put under ſuch an undue reſtraint, ſuffer the violence of a *Priſoner*, when it ſhould ſuſtain the place of a *Judge*: becauſe many Men dare not permit their conſciences to ſpeak, leſt they ſhould ſay more than they are willing to hear. And laſtly, ſince theſe perſons make their appeal to reaſon, pretend the aids, and boaſt in the advantages of that, it may not be amiſs to bring the *Cauſe* unto that *Bar*, whoſe *Empire* and *Authority* none muſt diſclaim that own the *Style*, and leaſt of all thoſe *Scepticks* in Religion with whom we have to do; who will allow of no conviction but from it.

AND *God*, who, as the Apoſtle ſays, *leaves not himſelf without witneſs*, has ſo temper'd and diſpos'd his *Precepts* as to qualifie them to paſs even this *Teſt* alſo, they being not the *contradictions* but *improvements* of natural Reaſon: and ſo moſt apt to recommend themſelves to all that is *Man*, not *Brute* about us. Indeed they have the very ſame aim and deſign with that. It has ever been the grand buſineſs of *ſober reaſon* firſt to diſcover, and then to attain that *one ſupreme*

*good*, which would give reſt and felicity to the ſoul: in this inquiſition have the *Philoſophers* and greateſt Maſters of Reaſon, laid out their moſt ſerious ſtudies and deepeſt contemplations; and in their indefatigable purſuits ſeem joyntly to ſigh out *David*'s queſtion, *Who will ſhew us any good?* And now the *Goſpel* comes a ſolution of this ſo important a Query, *brings theſe glad tidings of joy* to all people, and that not only in its *credenda*, by informing us what that *good* is; but in its *agenda* too, by tracing us out the way to it; beating us a path which will certainly lead us to that *ſummum bonum* which our very *nature* implicitly gaſps after; and ſure *reaſon* can never jar with *this*, which comes thus as a happy *Auxiliary* to ſuccour its impotence: as an infallible *guide* to conduct its ſteps: and as a glorious *light* to give it a clear view of what it before blindly groped after. 'Tis a certain Indication of *madneſs*, to *tear* and miſchief thoſe things that would be uſeful to us, to curſe and revile a Friend, or fly in the face of thoſe whoſe charity brings them to our aid; and therefore 'tis moſt evident that *reaſon* muſt firſt ceaſe to be reaſon, and commence *phrenzy*, before 'tis poſſible it can ſet it ſelf in defiance of thoſe Laws of Chriſt, which are thus accommodated to its greateſt Intereſts.

AND as the accord is thus obſervable in the *ultimate*, ſo is it in the *intermediate* deſign alſo. *Reaſon* had by its twilight diſcern'd, that that Soveraign *bliſs* it aim'd at, would never be hit by an

an unſteady hand; by him who was perpetually toſſed and agitated by his turbulent inordinate Appetites. Therefore young Men, yet in the heat and ferment of their blood, were ſolemnly proſcrib'd and baniſht from the Schools and Lectures of *Philoſophy*; therefore luſtrations and *Cathartick*s of the mind were ſought for, and all endeavour us'd to calm and regulate the *fury*, if not extirpate (which ſome contended for) the very *being* of the Paſſions: that ſo a preparation might be made, *firſt* for the knowledge, and *then* the attainment of felicity: Now the *Goſpel Precepts* have viſibly the ſame *end* and Purpoſe: every one of them expreſly ſingling out ſome irregular affection to combat and ſubdue: ſo that *right Reaſon* and *they* are evidently of a *Sect* and Party, inſomuch that ſeveral of the ancienteſt Fathers of the Church attributed the excellent documents of *Heathen Philoſophers* to the *Divine* λόγος, the reaſon and eſſential *Word of God* which after was *incarnate* upon Earth: and brought auxiliary ſtrengths of *grace*, to aid the weakneſſes of *nature*. The bleſſed *Jeſus* whoſe bare word *checkt the Sea* in its higheſt fury, and by that Miracle atteſted *His Divinity*; as much exerts himſelf in ſilencing the louder Tempeſts, and calming the inteſtine ſtorms within our breaſts. And certainly *reaſon* will not quarrel to have been thus reliev'd, it being the *property* only of proud *folly* to chuſe rather to *loſe* a victory, than *owe* it to the aid of an Allie.

FROM this general view, it were eaſie to

deſcend to obſerve the exact concurrence of particulars. God loves *a reaſonable ſervice*, and has ſo temper'd his Commands, that every Act of Obedience we perform may be ſo qualified, and gain unto its votaries the *Elogium* promis'd in the Law of *Moſes*, *Deut.* 4. 9. *Surely this People is a wiſe and underſtanding People*, And firſt that the command of *Meekneſs* is a moſt *rational Precept*, can never be doubted by any, who remember but the common definition of *Anger*, that it is *Furor brevis*, and ſure 'tis very reaſonable not to be mad; and he that has obſerv'd the unmanly tranſportations of that wild paſſion, how that the firſt violence it offers is to the man within him, will certainly think it the intereſt, not only of his *Religion*, but common prudence, and right *Reaſon* to ſuppreſs it. And the like is to be ſaid of the more ſolemn *phrenzy* of deep malice and deliberate *Revenge*, where the Fury wants the allay of being tranſient and ſhort liv'd, is embodied into Complexion and Temper, and grows inveterate into Nature. *Anger* indeed is a *fire*, and he that touches it, though but lightly, will find it *ſcorch* him: but the malicious lays himſelf as it were to *roaſt* at it; prolongs and ſpins out his own *Torment*, as if he meant to anticipate his *puniſhment* in his very crime, and commence his *Hell* here, *in unquenchable fire*. Truly no *ſin* does more repreſent that State of horror to which it tends; it gives a Man not only a certain *title*, but an ample *earneſt*, pays him part in hand of thoſe diſmal wages. This was ſo well underſtood

ſtood even by the *Heathens*, that we ſee the *Poets* knew not how more *emphatically* to deſcribe the future *torment* of an envious and malicious perſon, than by the repreſentation of his *ſin*. *Prometheus*'s *Vultur* begins her quarry in this life; every malignant *Thought*, every ſpightful *Wiſh* preys upon his *heart* that harbours it: every revengeful project puts him in the pangs of labour till it be brought forth; and when it is, it commonly rebounds ſo miſchievouſly upon the Parent, that the birth ſeems like that of *Agrippina*, when ſhe bare *Nero* that murder'd her. And ſurely not only *reaſon*, but common *ſenſe* will ſay this is a ſtate to be deteſted, and conſequently muſt give its ſuffrage to thoſe Laws of Meekneſs and Charity, which are the only expedients to prevent it. *Peace* is deſervedly reckon'd among the *higheſt bleſſings* of Communities, and ſure it has a proportionable value, in every ſingle member of thoſe greater bodies, it being that which is indiſpenſably requiſite to the enjoying of any other good. A *War* we know interrupts at once all the *profits* and *pleaſures* of a Nation: and this hoſtile *temper* in a Man's mind does the very ſame, and like *Choler* in the Stomach, takes off all *guſt* of the moſt delightful things, and ſo becomes a *Hell* in the *pœna damni*, as well as that of *Senſe*: and then how abſurd an impatience is it, for Men to think every the ſlighteſt injury from another inſupportable, and yet heap ſuch heavy preſſures upon themſelves: like froward *Children* roar out for the leaſt touch from *another* hand, yet knock

knock and batter *themſelves* without complaint: as if their only contention were, that they may be the ſole *Authors* of their own *Calamity*. And that which adds yet more, if it be poſſible to add to ſo vaſt a folly, is, that *revenge* never repairs any *Injury*: If I have been reproacht or defam'd, 'tis not the wounding of my enemies body that will heal my fame; I may by that means help to ſpread the Libel by inviting many to enquire the cauſe of our quarrel: but that is no *Medium* to prove him a Slanderer, the world being too well acquainted with the nature of revenge to imagine it an argument of his innocency that acts it: ſo far it is from being ſuch, that it gives a moſt violent preſumption of guilt, according to that notable *obſervation* of the *Hiſtorian*, *Convitia ſpreta exoleſcunt, ſi iraſcare agnita videntur*. In like manner ſuppoſe me hurt in my body, *retaliation* brings no *balm* to my ſores: my pains abate not by his having the like or greater; nor would my wounds *feſter the leſs* though his ſhould *gangrene*. So if I am indamag'd in my goods, I may contrive to repay him that ill turn, and yet not recover my own loſs; and generally the ſpightful ſpoils that are made, are of that nature. 'Tis true, the Law may in ſome caſes repair the injur'd perſon; but then that is owing to the Juſtice of the *Law*, not to the malice of the *Plantiff*: for he that ſues upon the naked intuition of recovering his *right*, without any aſpect of *revenge* on the invader, has as fully the benefit of the *Law*, (and indeed none can innocently have it

t otherwiſe) and then to what ſerves the vindi-ative humour, what increment or advantage can he ſuperaddition of his revenge bring him in? Tis ſure in all theſe inſtances it often does the uite contrary; plunges him in farther troubles nd dangers, and when all this is conſider'd, we ay certainly pronounce *Chriſt*'s Precept of eekneſs partakes as well of the *Serpent* as the ove, is as well *prudent* as *innocent*: nor is this *Concluſion* at all ſhaken by that *Objection* which en make from the danger of inviting more in-ries and affronts by this tameneſs: for firſt ſup-oſe there were truth in it; that hazard could ot balance the many certain miſchiefs which ave been evinc'd inſeparably to follow the con-rary temper: and it were certainly leſs penal to ndure multitudes of light and tranſient *Abuſes*, han thoſe far more uneaſie ways of *redreſs*, which ens revenges ſuggeſt to them: and then 'twill e perfectly reaſonable, *of* theſe *two evils to chuſe he leſs*. As for the greater and more important iolations, there are legal ways which may prove edreſs in ſome caſes, or prevention in others: e that is ſlandered or impoveriſhed, may take a ourſe to clear his *Innocence*, or recover his *goods*: e that is hurt or maim'd, though he is uncapable f reparations, yet the Law provides for his fu-ure ſecurity, by awarding ſuch *penalties*, as may iſcourage the *offender* from repeating the *vio-ence*: And to theſe aids, a Man may reſort with heſe *Proviſo*'s, *firſt*, that he abſtract from all de-ign of *Revenge*; and *ſecondly*, that the *matter* be

of

of *weight*; and certainly he that by theſe *legal means* cannot be ſecur'd, can be much leſs ſo by any *private attempt* of his own: For he that deſpiſeth the coercive *power* of Laws, will much more contemn the *enmity* of a ſingle perſon. The only difficulty in this caſe is, when a State is in ſuch a confuſion that there is no lawful Judicature to appeal to; but that implies ſo many ſadder miſeries, than the want of ſuch a redreſs amounts to, that every Man may patiently enough caſt this into the heap of greater evils; and not conſider that one preſſure, when ſo much weightier calamity exacts his grief: But ſure the *ſuſpenſion of Law* in this particular does no more *qualifie* a private perſon to be his own *Revenger*, than it inveſts him in any other part of *Authority*; and he may with as good right place himſelf on the Bench, and become a *Judge* in *other* Mens cauſes, as thus become both *Judge* and *Executioner* in his *own*.

BUT in the *laſt* place, the ground of this objection ſeems weak and ſandy; for that meekneſs is not the way to expoſe a Man, generally ſpeaking, to more ſuffering: 'tis poſſible indeed through the barbarity of ſome few inſulting *Cowards*, who love to vapour *good cheap*, that they may trample on thoſe who give leaſt reſiſtance; but this is not the common bent of *humane Nature*, (which ought to be the meaſure in this caſe) we find men uſually exaſperated by *oppoſition*, who are calm'd and appeas'd by *gentleneſs*. *Anger* is not of the nature of that monſtrous *Fire*

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he *Hiſtorian* tells us of, which *nothing but blows ould extinguiſh.* It is the *obſervation* of the wieſt of Men, that *a ſoft anſwer turneth away wrath,* nd Mens *Paſſions* are like *Bullets* which batter he Walls which ſtand inflexible, but fall harmeſly into Wool or Feathers; and I doubt not ommon experience will atteſt it, that none do enerally fall under fewer of theſe ſtorms, than hey, who are thus prepar'd to bear them. Let meek and an angry perſon caſt up their Acounts together, and compare the number of afronts and contumelies they have met with, and I elieve the *odds* will be as *great,* as between *Saul's* houſands and *David's* ten thouſands. 'Tis certain that the return made to the firſt Injury prokes a new one; Men being ſo partial to themelves, that he who receives a harm by way of *etaliation,* never reflects on his own firſt guilt, ut looks on it as a naked *injury,* and ſo purſues is Revenge, which has again the ſame effect on he other, and ſo this *wild-fire* runs round, till it ave ſet all in a *flame*; made the ſaddeſt vaſtatins, not only in Mens *minds,* but their outward *oncernments* too, in the many fatal outrages, which theſe eager contentions occaſion, all which would be avoided by a meek diſregard of the firſt rovocation: So that although ſome injuries may all upon the Paſſive man, yet infallibly there would be no broils and quarrels, which are alone he great accumulators and multipliers of injuies; which alone demonſtrates how unjuſtly *eekneſs,* is charg'd with ſo much as an accidental

production of them; and vindicate that *precept* of *Chriſt* which has fallen under ſo much, not only *cavil* but *ſcorn*; it appearing, that to abſtain from revenge, and refer the hazards of that to God's providence (which is the importance of his command *to turn the cheek*) is the greateſt even moral *ſecurity* againſt *violence*, and ſo approves our *Law-giver* (in this ſo decried particular) to be as well the *wonderful Counſeller*, as the *Prince of Peace*.

IN the next place, if we weigh the *precept* of humility and lowlineſs in the *balance* of ſober diſcourſe, we ſhall certainly find it hold a *juſt weight*. Indeed *pride* is nothing but *deceit*, a mere cheat and deluſion, and ſo every Man can diſcern it in another, we *there* are able to trace the windings of this *Serpent*, and ſay, *this* Man thinks himſelf more wiſe, *this* more learned, a *third* more holy than he is: yet alaſs! in our own breaſts we diſcern not the *Abuſe*, ſuffer him to perſuade *us* what he but promiſed to our *firſt Parents*, that we are *as Gods*, ſomething ſo ſuper-excellent, that all muſt reverence and adore: And herein we take him at his word, never ſuſpect theſe glorious *Attributions* may be no more than *complement* or *Flattery*; or what is no leſs obvious, *deriſion* and *ſcorn*. To a conſidering man 'twould be a ſhrewd *preſumption* againſt whatever *pride* ſuggeſts, that 'tis attended always by *ſelf-love*, which is, as it were, the *common Setter* to all thoſe cheats which circumvent and fool us: But there want not alſo more convincing proofs of its deceit and unſincerity. When e'er we overween and believe well of

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our ſelves, it is in contemplation of ſome *imaginary* or elſe *real* good; ſomewhat a Man has not, or ſomewhat that he has: If we do it upon the former account, that is undeniably a groſs *deluſion*; a kind of *deceptio viſus*, a filling the eye with phantaſtick *Aerial* Images, which have no ſolid Being: And God knows, ſuch *Phantams*, ſuch Apparitions are moſt of thoſe *excellencies* which Men applaud in themſelves; things conjured up by the *Magick* of a ſtrong imagination, and are only ſeen within that *Circle* in which the *Enchanter* ſtands: And though *Satan* be the *grand Maſter of this black Art*, yet his *Pupils* are now grown ſo dexterous, that he ſeldom needs to be call'd in; our own partialities and fondneſſes to our ſelves, are abundantly ſufficient for the purpoſe. But if in the *ſecond* place we ſuppoſe the things to be *really* exiſtent in us, yet *pride* runs us upon an *other error* no leſs dangerous than the *former*, for it betrays us to miſtake the true *owner* of them, emboldens us to ſet our own mark upon thoſe *rich Wares*, in whoſe acqueſt we have not been ſo much as *Factors*; God is the one great Author and Proprietor of all that is or can be valuable in us; to his Providence or his Grace we owe all the accompliſhment of our outward or inward man, and though he allows us the *uſe* and benefit of them, yet the *glory* is a ſpecial *Royalty* which (as the Gold or Silver mines of a Nation) is reſerved to his *Crown*, an incommunicable piece of his *Regality*. And how wofully does our *Pride* befool us, when it brings us in ſuch falſe *Inventories*

*ries* of our goods, make us dream our ſelves rich by anothers wealth; like *children* that *call every thing theirs which looks ſplendidly*, or the mad *Athenian* celebrated by *Horace* for his happy phrenzie, that *reſolv'd all the Ships and Wares his own that came into the Cities Harbour*: But how more ſadly does it betray us, when it thus puts us upon the invaſion of *his* propriety, who is not, as the impotent *Monarchs* of the Earth, unable to aſſert his own *rights*, but can certainly *vindicate* himſelf to our *confuſion*; againſt whom no rebellion can be any longer proſperous than he willingly permits it, and who has ſolemnly avowed *he will not give his glory to another*: And when our *pride* makes us thus both ridiculous and miſerable, when it ſeduces us not only into the folly of *Children*, and extravagancies of *Lunaticks*, but at once into the guilt of bold, and puniſhment of improſperous *Rebels*: Certainly reaſon can never become its *Advocate*, or put in any *demur* to that ſentence which excludes ſo treacherous a *gueſt* out of Mens hearts; which is the ſole aim of thoſe *laws of humility* which *Chriſt* has given us.

NOR will the Precepts of *temperance* and *purity* find any *worſe doom* at this *Bar*, the contrary *vices* being ſuch indignities and contumelies unto humane nature, as can never find any *countenance* from this Supreme part of it. 'Tis the prerogative of our Reaſon, that it diſcriminates us *from*, and elevates us *above* beaſts: nor can it ever be brought to reſign this ſo glorious a privilege, aſſent to the admiſſion of thoſe brutiſh appe-

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petites which would over-run the *Soul*, level its *ſuperior* with its *inferior* faculties; confound the diſtinction of *rational* and *ſenſitive*, and in a word, render the *Beaſt* ſo ravenous as to eat up the *Man*. Yet thus it is in thoſe ſordid Sins of *intemperance* and *uncleanneſs*, unleſs perhaps they are ſo much worſe than *beſtial* that I wrong the generality of the Brutes in the compariſon, it being only ſome few of them, the very *beaſts* of the Beaſts that are guilty of any ſuch exceſſes; for generally their *appetites* do not tranſgreſs the regular ends of *nature*, they know no ſuch diſeaſe as *ſurfeiting*, but eat to ſatisfie *hunger*, and couple at ſuch ſeaſons as beſt tend to preſerve their kind: and then 'tis to be conſider'd, how baſe, how degenerous a deſcent it is for us to ſtoop, not only below our *own* nature, but *theirs*; what a *ſolitude* theſe vices reduce us to, that not ſo much as the nobler ſort of *beaſts* will bear us *company*; we muſt wander upon the *mountains* to court a *Goat*, we muſt rake the *mire* to find a *Swine*, before we can furniſh our ſelves with any *aſſociates*: And ſure all this is ſo open an *hoſtility* againſt Reaſon, that it can by no means be her *intereſt* to abet it. Ask her whether ſhe would be *preſt to death* with *loads of meat*, whether ſhe would be *drown'd* in *flouds of drink*, whether ſhe would be *ſuffocated* with the *noiſom vapours of putrefaction* and rottenneſs, and the *anſwer* ſhe gives to theſe tells you her ſenſe of *Gluttony*, *Drunkenneſs* and *Uncleanneſs*: Alaſs! ſhe ſuffers from them the moſt barbarous outrages, is invaded not only

in her *authority*, but her very *Being*, and therefore even upon the ſo celebrated principle of ſelf preſervation, muſt muſter all her forces to vindicate the injury and defend her ſelf. And then certainly *Chriſt's commands* of *ſobriety* and *purity* muſt needs be entertain'd with all *alacrity* and *gladneſs*, as an acceſſion of *ſtrength* to her party, an *aid* to aſſiſt her in that juſt and neceſſary *War*.

AND as *reaſon* thus pronounces againſt the ſins of the *fleſh*, ſo in the next place does it certainly againſt thoſe of the *World*. *Mammon* himſelf will not be able to bribe this *Judge*, but when *Chriſt's Precept* of Charity and liberality comes before this *Tribunal*, it will infallibly be not only *acquitted* but *magnified* and applauded, be call'd from the *Bar* to the *Bench*, Commiſſioned like the *Jews*, *Heſt. 9. To bear rule over them that hated them*; to diſſipate at once the wealth and the covetouſneſs of the *worldling*; have the *keys* put into its hand; that it may have free acceſs to his *Coffers*; this certainly muſt be the event of this trial, for 'tis confeſſedly the part of *reaſon* to *diſpoſe* every thing to thoſe *uſes* which are moſt *proper* and *advantageous*, ſuch as may bring in moſt *real benefit* to the owner. Now what other employment of *wealth* is there (after competent accommodations are provided) which can contribute to a man's *felicity?* If it be laid out like the *rich man's* in the Goſpel, *in delicious fare*, or *Purple* and *fine Linen*; certainly it makes no leaſt approach towards it. Firſt, for exceſſive Fare, if a man be *not exceſſive* too in the

eating,

eating, what does he *enjoy* of it? *Meat* has no natural propriety to the *eye*, and can make no impressions of pleasure there; but if he be *voracious* and intemperate, 'tis then so far from making him *happy*, that it dejects him into the *forlorn condition*, even now mentioned, sets him at odds with his *reason*, his very *manhood*, nay, I may add with his very *sense* too; the displacencies that he receives by the consequences of his excess, far out-weighing all that is grateful in it. This is well describ'd by the *Wise man*, *Ecclus.* 31.19.

AS for the *gayety of Apparel*, that can never in sober judging be thought any advantage; 'tis that which only *youth* and *folly* puts a value upon, and as we out grow the one, so do we the other: All that is convenient in Cloaths is as well, nay, better provided for without it: A rich *Suit* is only *heavier*, not *warmer* than a plain; and it is a kind of prodigy to see *how heavily vanity*, which is in it self so *light*, sits upon some men; who are content even to make themselves *Porters*, so their *Taylors* may lay on the *burthen*: And thus in many other instances the fineness of Cloaths destroys the ease, so that it often *helps* men to pain, but can never *rid* them of any; the body may be languishing and infirm under the most splendid cover: *Herod's royal apparel* secures him not from being *eaten with worms*; and *Lazarus his Ulcers* would have been never the less *painful*, though they had been *wrapt in* Dives *his fine Linen.*

OR if the *wealth* be laid out on any other part of *that* the world calls *greatness*, as an *honourable*

*retinue*, *Troops of Attendants*, and the like; the return will be no leſs *empty*: Multitudes of unprofitable *ſervants* being a great *burthen*, but no degree of *advantage*. Alas! does my meat reliſh ever the better, becauſe my Table is ſurrounded with *waters*? Or when I go out, does my *train of followers* make the air the more refreſhing to me, does not rather the duſt they raiſe make it leſs, annoy and ſtifle me? As for *matter of buſineſs*, the number of *ſervants* tends rather to hinder than advance it; daily experience atteſting, that in crouds of domeſticks every one of them thinks his idleneſs will be hid: the *care* of *doing* and the *guilt* of *omitting* is transferr'd from one to another, and none has any farther thought, than how he may quit himſelf either of the *burthen* or the *blame*; ſo that upon the final account of all that accrues to a *Maſter* by the *greatneſs of his Family* is the encreaſe of his care in the regiment of it: A a great deal of vigilance and circumſpection being requir'd to keep it in any tolerable *order*, and if it be not ſo kept, his Houſe becomes a *Wilderneſs*, and himſelf a *prey* to the Beaſts he feeds: The licentiouſneſs of the Servant redounding more ways than one to the damage of the Maſter.

IF we ſhould now proceed more *minutely* to every other *ſingle expence* which *vanity* and *pride* ſuggeſts, we ſhould certainly find the like ſucceſs of our inqueſt; nothing of *real felicity*, but on the contrary the *vanity* ſo interwoven and incorporate with *vexation of Spirit*, that 'tis impoſſible to ſever them: So that *thus* to employ one's

riches

riches is rather to *suffer* than *enjoy* them. But if we suppose a man on the other side such a *Reverer of his Wealth*, that he dares not *employ* it at all, unless it be at the *bank*, for the bringing in of more, that keeps it as men do beasts reserv'd for breed, manumit them from all work but that of propagation. Such a person is surely of all others the fartheſt from receiving any advantage by it: he converts it from a *servant* into a *tyrant*, and sad experience shews us the calamity of such a transmutation. It has been always held the severest *treatment* of *slaves* and *Malefactors*, *damnare ad Metalla*, force them to dig in Mines; now this is the *covetous mans lot*, from which he is never to expect a release, as being his own remorseless and more than *Egyptian task master*: and the parallel holds too, in the gainlesness as well as laboriousness of the work; Those wretched *creatures* buried in *earth* and darkness were never the *richer* for all the *Ore* they digg'd, no more is the *insatiate Miser*, he has no Power to *dispose* of any of his *acquests*; and though he calls them *his*, yet alas he possesses them no otherwise than a *prisoner* does his *Goal*, a *Mad man* his *Chains*, they are only instruments of his *thraldom*, and the getting more serves only to add more weight to his Shackles; and certainly *wealth* can be no way worse dispos'd, than thus to buy so base a *servitude*.

AND now since neither the *luxurious* spending, nor the *covetous* keeping can advantage us one step towards any thing that can be call'd

*happy*; but do on the contrary *engage* us upon toil and *miſery*: *Wealth* ſeems to be a very oppreſſive *burthen*, ſuch as we can neither *caſt off*, nor ſafely *bear*; and truly ſo it is till *Charity* comes in to our Aid; which as the proper *element of wealth*, renders that *Light* which gravitates elſewhere, and as the *Elixir* unto *Metals* transforms them into *Gold*, ſtamps *purity* and *price* upon them: by freely giving, endows the *Donor* with whatever he beſtows; enriches *him*, and what is more, enriches *wealth* it ſelf. Without this *art of uſing*, and diſpoſing our eſtates, we are thoſe *Indians* who change their Gold for Glaſs: that ſilly *Fiſherman*, who having found a *maſs of Ambergreece*, employed it to the *liquoring of his Boots*; are fooliſh to the height of *Midas* in the Fable; who being promis'd to have whatever he would *wiſh*, made his *demand* that every thing he toucht might preſently be *Gold*, and run the hazard that he did of being *ſtarv'd* by our unhappy affluence: Men ſay indeed that *Gold by preparation* becomes a *ſoveraign cordial*, but certainly it never does rejoyce the heart ſo much as when Charity is the *Chymiſt*; the *poor man's hand* is the beſt *Limbeck* to extract this *Magiſtery* and *Tincture*, the *flames of love* will really perform thoſe *Miracles*, they of the Furnace boaſt of; and would they employ themſelves in this *Laboratory*, they would find the *omnipotent efficacy* they dream of, ſooner in this way of *diſſipating*, than in all their *arts*, or rather Fancies of generating Gold. 'Tis certainly a moſt generous and enlivening pleaſure which re-

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ſults from a *ſeaſonable liberality:* When I ſee a man ſtrugling with *want*, his very Spirit as well as Body ſtooping under the preſſure; if I then relieve him, the *humane nature* within me which is common to us both, does by a kind of *Sympathetick motion* exult and raiſe up it ſelf; but if I have any *piety*, that muſt do it much more; for as the *former* ſhew'd me *my own image* in my poor *brother*, ſo *this* ſhews me *God's*: and how tranſcendent a ſatisfaction muſt it be, to have thus reſcued him who bears ſo Divine an Impreſs, to have paid ſome part of *gratitude* to my Creator for my own *being*, by making my ſelf, in my low ſphere, the giver or preſerver of that life, which he firſt breathed into another? *This*, and this only is the *way* to raiſe a *felicity* out of *wealth*; and ſurely ſince the attaining of *happineſs* is the one grand *purſuit* of our *reaſon*, that muſt even before it has ſubjected it ſelf to the *faith of Chriſt*, give aſſent to the *prudence of his Command* in *this* as well as the *former* inſtances.

BUT there remains a *Precept* of our *Saviours* allied to this; which ſeems by no means to *comport* and *hold a Correſpondence* with the dictates of *right reaſon*; the *taking up the Croſs*, and *ſuffering for righteouſneſs ſake*; which contradicts the fundamental Law of *Self preſervation*, and the great end of Being, Felicity and Happineſs. But this *ſuggeſtion*, how ſpecious ſoever it appear, is utterly fallacious; for 'tis no good conſequence, that becauſe *reaſon* aims at our being happy, therefore it forbids us all *voluntary ſufferings*, ſince

that the caſe may be ſo ſet, that *ſuch a ſuffering* may be the faireſt *medium* left us to our *happineſs*. 'Tis a known rule, that *of two evils the leaſt is to be choſen*; and the election of the leſſer ill, though it be no *abſolute*, yet is a *comparative* good; and its *attainment* as far as the neceſſity of our affairs permits, is our *felicity*: and reaſon can provide no farther. Now this is the eſtate of the preſent inſtance: *two evils* are propos'd, a *natural* and *moral*; the Natural, though in its ſelf to be averted, yet much inferior to the Moral, and then *reaſon* ſoon reſolves the *Dilemma*, that the *natural is to be choſen*: All that can be queſtion'd in this affair is, *whether Reaſon define the moral evil to be the greater*, but this can bear no long diſpute with any who conſider but the *nature of Reaſon*, which being ſeated in the *upper ſoul* of a man, is no way concern'd in thoſe *Ills*, which make their impreſſion on the *ſenſitive part*: but *moral* ills ſtrike higher, invade the *Mind* cloud the *Reaſon*; nay, often depoſe it from its regiment, as is too frequently exemplified in the force of vicious habits; and therefore by how much our *reaſon* is ſuperior to our *ſenſe*, ſo much are thoſe to be accounted the *greateſt evils*, which aſſault that nobler part of us. This certainly will now be the *determination* of Reaſon, if ſhe may be permitted the freedom of her vote: for thus was it formerly, where ſhe bare the moſt ſway, and uncontrouled rule; the wiſeſt and beſt conſidering of *humane*, as well as *divine Authors* having eſtabliſht it as an undoubted *Apho-*

*riſm*,

*rism*, that *honesty is to be preferr'd before both gainful and pleasant*: so that nothing renders a man so *deplorable*, as that which viola es his *integrity*; nay they have generally gone higher, exhorted men to *become voluntiers in virtues warfare, not to suspend their sufferings, till they were forc'd out by the competition of a crime; but offer themselves free oblations.* Thus to suffer for ones *Country* or ones *Friend*, was thought so worthy, so *heroick* a thing, that *noble* and *ingenuous Spirits* were *emulous* of it: and it was so stated a case that *Epictetus* forbids a man, on such an occasion to consult with the *Oracle*, whether he should do it or no, it being *necessary* to be done, whatever ill success or ruine be predicted, ὅτε ὁ θάνατος σημαίνεται, ἢ πήρωσις μέρους σώματος, ἢ φυγή, and how serious they were in these *persuasions*, some of them have *practically* evidenced, as having suffered very considerable pressures, nay *death* it self, rather than they would bow to the *predominant vices* of their Age, or omit the occasion of *eminent virtue*. *Aristides* would be just in spight of the *Ostracism*. *Regulus* observant of his *oath* made to a *faithless enemy*, though *death* and *torment* attended the *performance*. *Lycurgus* to perpetuate to his Citizens the benefit of his *good Laws*, as subtilly designs *perpetual banishment* unto himself, as others use to contrive for *Honour* and for *Empire* there. *Codrus* redeems the safety of his *Army* with his own *death*: *Curtius* makes himself a *Martyr* for his *Country*, and *Socrates* in the stricter sence becomes one for his *God*: laid down his *life* in attestation

teſtation of that moſt *fundamental Truth* and leading *Article of Faith*, πιςευειν εἰς ἕνα θεὸν, the *belief* of *one God*. And yet we find not that *thoſe times*, which were ſo *ill* as to ſhed his *blood*, were yet ſo *bad* as to defame his *memory*: he's not recorded either as *fool* or *hypochondriack*; nor have his *ſufferings* ſtruck him out of the liſt of *Philoſophers*: but he ſtands there the more conſpicuouſly in thoſe *bloody characters*; and however the credit of the *Oracle* may be otherwiſe diſparaged, it never was on this account, that it had declared *Socrates* to be the *Wiſeſt of Men*. And yet both he and the reſt, had either *none*, or very *imperfect* confus'd apprehenſions of a future *reward*, when they engag'd on preſent Suffering, and death it ſelf: So that we might be tempted to imagine, that ſome ſtrange change and *tranſmutation* has now befaln *virtue*, that it has put on ſo much a *diſtant* appearance from its *ancient* ſelf, that the acceſſion of new obligations, and higher hopes, ſhould abſolve, avert and utterly diſpirit us; inſomuch that what was Conſtancy in a *Heathen*, ſhould be Folly in a *Chriſtian*. Certainly this is a *Metamorphoſis* of our own making, we look through deforming *Optick-Glaſſes*, ſuch as our *avarice* or effeminate *ſenſualities* convey into our hands, which give not only *ſtrange* and ghaſtly, but withal *ridiculous ſhapes*; but if we would conſult our *Reaſon*, that would ſhew us things in their *proper forms*. Virtue and Reaſon are both the ſame they were ſo many hundred years ago, and where the *object* and

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the *faculty* admit of no *mutation*, 'tis impoſſible there ſhould really be any ſuch *variable appearance*. If *Socrates* were ſo zealous for the *One God*, that he choſe rather to relinquiſh his *life*, than to conſent to, or but connive at the *profane rivalry of Polytheiſm*, and yet be no Fool; certainly we may as ſecurely tranſcribe his Copy: and though the particular Article may not be the ſame; yet if it be any thing wherein Virtue is concern'd, the cauſe is no leſs warrantable: He that ſuffers for a practical point, is no more a prodigal of his pains, than he that lays them out on the higheſt *ſpeculative*. The *Commandments* may have as good *Martyrs* as the *Creed*; for the ſame *authority* has requir'd our *Obedience* to the *one*, that exacts our *faith* of the *other*. Nor is there any neceſſity of *Heathen* or *Jewiſh* Tribunal, to convert our ſufferings to *Martyrdom*; we may receive that crown from the hands of thoſe that own the ſame faith with us. Thoſe that ſay with the moſt ſeeming vehemence, *Let the Lord be glorified*, may yet hate and caſt out their brethren for his names ſake, *Iſa. 66.* 5. He that tells me I fear not *God ſo much* as he, may yet perſecute me for honouring the *King more*; and my *blood* pour'd out upon that account, becomes an *acceptable ſacrifice* to him, who has commanded my Subjection to the *higher Powers*. He who calls Chriſt his *head*, may yet rend and tear his Body: and if I love its communion ſo well, as to take my ſhare in the *Maſſacre*, I approach toward that dignity and comfort S. *Paul* ſo glories in,

in, of *filling up that which is behind, of the afflictions of Chriſt in my fleſh, for his body's ſake which is the Church*, *Col.* 1. 24. He that mulcts the more *indeliberate* Oaths, may yet enjoyn a ſolemn Perjury: and if I chuſe he ſhould rather make havock of my *goods* than my Conſcience; my *ſpoils* become not more monuments of his *rapine* than my *piety*: they plead my innocence before him who *will not hold him guiltleſs that taketh his name in vain*: and how profanely ſoever my *wealth* is diſpos'd by him that ſeiſes it, 'tis accounted to me as caſt into the *treaſury*; and ſo 'tis poſſible I may at once vie with the *rich men* in the greatneſs of the oblation, and with the *poor widow* too in that higher circumſtance of its being all. In ſumm, the opportunities of *Martyrdom* are not reſtrained to thoſe points wherein *Chriſtians* differ from *Jews* or *Heathens*, but extend to all wherein we Chriſtians differ from our rule, the commands of our bleſſed Maſter. If I ſuffer for my *conſtancy* to any of them, I have certainly my place in *God's Martyrology*, as well as if I had fallen under any of the *Ten Perſecutions*. God was not ſo partial to the *primitive Chriſtians* as to allow them the *Monopoly* and encloſure of that dignity; if they as our *elder brethren* had a *double portion*, yet there is ſtill a *childs part* lett for every one of us, enough to teſtifie our *legitimation*, and ſecure us from the brand of *baſtardy*, *Heb.* 12. 'Twas S. *Paul*'s indefinite affirmation, and all times ſince have born witneſs to the truth of it; *That all that will live godly in Chriſt*

*Chriſt Jeſus ſhall ſuffer perſecution.* Some *unfaſhionable virtues* there have been in every Age, which have whetted, if not the *Swords*, yet the *Tongues* of men: and thoſe that happen not to fall under *Abel's* perſecution, muſt not hope to eſcape that of *Iſaac*: If they meet with no *Gain* to *kill*, they will undoubtedly with an *Iſhmael* to *mock* them. But in what dreſs ſoever our *ſufferings* appear, a good cauſe diveſts them of their *frightful ſhape*, pulls off the ugly *vizard*, and ſhews us a *beauty* that lay there conceal'd; and that not only to the Eye of our Faith but our Reaſon too. *Fortitude* was a *virtue* before *Chriſtianity* had a name in the world; and the very inſtinct of our *nature whiſpers* within us, the baſeneſs of being baffled out of a Truth or Virtue; yet ſuch a deſpicable *coward* is every man that wants this *paſſive valour*, without which the *active* muſt find another Name; Rage or Phrenzy it may be, in ſome perhaps natural *courage*, or ſanguineneſs of temper in others, but true Valour it is not, if it knows not as well to *ſuffer* as to *do*. That *mind* is truly great, and only that which ſtands above the *power* of all *extrinſick violence*, which keeps it ſelf a diſtinct *principality* independent upon the outward man, ſo that it is not ſubjected to its fate; that can be *free*, when the body is faſt *bound* in Miſery and Iron, *ſound* and *healthy*, when that *groans* under torture, and is never more *ſtrong* and *vital*, than when that *languiſhes* and *expires*; and this is ſo deſirable, ſo tranſcendent a *privilege*, as *reaſon* cannot but *aſpire* to: and this is

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it to which this excellent *precept* of Chriſt advances us when we thus *ſuffer for righteouſneſs ſake*, our Minds are all *light*, what *darkneſs* ſoever involve our exterior part, and is like *Goſhen* exempt and ſecure, when that falls under all the Plagues of *Egypt*.

AND what reaſon thus embraces for it ſelf, 'tis not imaginable that it ſhould reject, becauſe 'tis richly clad; that the Race ſhould ſeem the more tedious, becauſe there is a Crown within view; or that the glorious *rewards* our Chriſtianity propoſes to our conſtancy, ſhou'd be eſteemed as *menaces* and *threats*, Temptations to deſert or turn Apoſtates. No certainly, Reaſon cannot diſpute, and make an *inference* ſo utterly *illogical*, but will rather uſe it as an *enforcement* of its former *concluſion*, eſtabliſh it the more firm and immoveable by having the *baſis* thus enlarged, having *reward* added to *virtue*, and happineſs entail'd on *duty*. If in the competition between two Evils, *reaſon* pronounce the *leſſer eligible*: Much more will ſhe reſolve, when the conteſt is 'twixt *good* and *evil*, the greateſt Evil and the greateſt Good; and chuſe that *excellence* which though *ſuperlative* in it ſelf, is more endear'd and heightned by compariſon. If I violate my *Reaſon*, if I renounce *virtue*, though bare and naked, then ſurely I do it yet more when ſhe is thus *accompliſht* and adorn'd; when *beautified* on purpoſe to allure the *eye*, and take the *heart*. When over and above the poſitive donation of Happineſs, ſhe adds a reſcue and releaſe from *miſery*, and

equally

equally obliges by the diſtant proſpects of a Hell and Heaven. So that not only the *Goſpel promiſes*, but even *menaces* and *threats* become a *weapon* in the hand of *reaſon*, when ſhe ſtands upon her *guard*, and fights for *virtue*. If *ſin* preſent it ſelf as my *Protector* from a *temporal* Calamity, *reaſon* will tell me hence, that the proffer is inſidious, it expoſes me to that which is *infinitely worſe* than what it pretends to ſave me from; and that not only in the former reſpect of Guilt, but in that of Puniſhment alſo. What a cheat is it to keep me out of the *dungeon*, and ſend me to the *bottomleſs pit*, to ſave me from a *temporary fire*, and thereby mark me out as Fuel for *eternal flames*; to take me out of *their hands* who can *kill the body*, to put me into *his* who can *deſtroy both ſoul and body in Hell? Reaſon* tells me, I am to abhor the *turpitude* and *foulneſs* of a Crime; and it tells me too, I am to dread the *miſery* and Smart of it alſo. It would not have me wallow in the mire, though it were *ſafe*, much leſs when it is full of *Aſps* and *Vipers*, which will infallibly ſting me to death. It cries out with *Joſeph*, *How ſhall I do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?* And it cries out with *Eſay* too, *Who can dwell with everlaſting fire?* In a word, by the domeſtick native *light* of the *candle of the Lord* ſet up within our *breaſt*, it ſhews the uglineſs of *ſin*; and ſhews it too by the affrightful diſmal *blaze* of thoſe *unquenchable flames* it kindles: Thus by the different *arguments* of terror and endearment, of love and fear, of intereſt and duty, *reaſon* aſſerts this

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ſcorn'd, decryed, neglected *precept*: Take her as mere *Paynim* abſtracting from the expectation of reward or puniſhment; or take her as a *Proſelyte* to Chriſt, contemplating his promiſes and threats: if there be *honeſty*, or if there be *religion*, in either inſtance the Soul muſt ſtill conclude, that *Affliction is to be choſen rather than Iniquity.*

AND if it be reaſonable thus to *reſiſt even unto blood ſtriving againſt ſin*, if *Reaſon* blow the *Trumpet*, ſound the *Alarm* to this ſolemn *War*, then ſurely it preſcribes ſomething of *Martial diſcipline* to prepare and diſpoſe us for thoſe *Combats*. No expert General will bring a company of raw untrain'd men into the *field*, but will by little bloodleſs Skirmiſhes inſtruct them in the manner of the *fight*, teach them the ready managery of their *Weapons*; and of this ſort are all thoſe *voluntary ſelf denials*, and lighter auſterities which Chriſtianity commends to us, which become neceſſary not ſimply for themſelves, but as inſtruments towards a higher end. The Military fame the *Romans* had in the world was atchieved by the exact diſcipline of their Camps, enuring their Souldiers to labour and hardſhip. And, as *Tacitus* tells us, when a *long peace* had ſlackned the reins of diſcipline, that *active humour*, which was wont to be ſpent on the Enemy, recoil'd, and flew in the face of their Commanders, begat nothing but *mutinies* and diſorders; and certainly 'twill be the ſame in our *Chriſtian Warfare*, if we abandon our ſelves to Eaſe and Sloth, never attempt to wraſtle with difficulty,

but

but keep our ſelves in the poſture the *Iſraelites* Camp was in at *Moſes*'s deſcent from the Mount, *eating and drinking, and riſing up to play*; our appetites will grow licentious and inſolent, paſt our controul and guidance. If we treat them with ſuch an indulgence as is recorded of *David* to *Adonijah*, never ſay ſo much as *why haſt thou done this?* 'Tis not to be expected but they will Rebel, though a *Solomon* ſit in the Throne. For alas, how is it imaginable, that he who never denied himſelf any the *ſmalleſt* or *moſt trifling pleaſures* he had a mind to, ſhall on a ſudden deny *all in the groſs*? He who has projected *many*, but never wav'd one opportunity of ſhewing his *wit*, how ſhall he find in his heart to become a *Fool for Chriſt*? He that has gratified his *palate* with all that pretends to be guſtful to it, how ſhall he deſcend to the *bread of affliction*? Or he that never tried to miſs a Meal, how will he entertain the unwelcom- contrariety of not knowing where to get one? He who has never abated any thing of the utmoſt *pomp* he could reach, how will he brook the want of neceſſaries; or from his Houſe ceil'd with *Cedar*, and painted with *Vermilion*, be content with his *Saviour*'s Lot, *not to have where to lay his head*? In ſhort, how ſhall he who never could pare off any of the *excreſcencies*, the mere *vanities* and *gayeties* of an eſtate, part with it *all*; or lay down that *life for Chriſt's ſake*, from which he never ſubſtracted one ſmalleſt *pleaſure*? *Suffering* is a thing to which the *ſenſitive* part of us has an innate *averſion*, and *averſions* are not to

be ſubdued at once, but by gentle and eaſie *degrees*; and cuſtom muſt have introduc'd a ſecond nature, before that original part of our temper will be ſupplanted. And 'tis therefore highly reaſonable for every Man to aſpire to the dominion of himſelf, to keep his *affections* within his own *power* and *command*; and though he have no intereſt at all in the greater, enjoy a ſoveraignty in the leſſer World: So in order to that, 'tis as reaſonable to diſcipline and tame them by ſome voluntary acts of reſtraint, like *Hannibal*, ſometimes to *paſs by that water to which his thirſts do moſt importunately invite him.* To try by little skirmiſhes what ſtrength and skill he has, before he runs the fatal hazard of a *battel.* To deny himſelf in the leſſer inſtances, that ſo when the greater come, they may not have the diſadvantage of uncouthneſs and perfect ſtrangeneſs to enhanſe their difficulty. And this muſt certainly be acknowledg'd *reaſonable*, or elſe we muſt condemn almoſt all the received Rules of *humane tranſactions*, which generally have this for their *ground-work*, that Men muſt paſs through the firſt *principles* and loweſt *Rudiments* of any Art, before they can arrive at its height. Men ſerve Apprentiſhips to Trades, and think not themſelves the firſt day Maſters of their Craft; we advance in *learning* by leiſurable and ſlow ſteps, and skip not from the *A B C* to the *Metaphyſicks*: And certainly the skill of a *Chriſtian ſuffering* is not the eaſieſt of all *Trades* or *Sciences*; but will require ſome time of *Initiation*, many repeated Trials and Eſſays to bring us into an

an acquaintance with it: To convince our *underſtandings*, and perſwade our *Wills*, that *to loſe our lives is to ſave them*; *and to be faithful unto the death*, is the beſt way *to gain a crown of life.*

IF I ſhould now proceed to every other *precept* of Chriſt, and examine it by the *rules* of *ſober diſcourſe*, we ſhould infallibly find them ſo rational as befits the Laws of *him* who is the *eternal reaſon*; but having made theſe *Eſſays* in ſome of the moſt oppos'd Inſtances, I ſhall preſume theſe may paſs as the *repreſentatives* of *all* the reſt; and the acquittal theſe have received at the Tribunal of Reaſon, virtually involve them all.

AND now ſince both *Conſcience* and *Reaſon* have pronounc'd the ſame of Chriſt's *Law*, that *Pilate* did of his *Perſon*, that *they find in them no fault at all*; methinks *Judges* ſhould have the ſame *privilege* that is allowed to *private Men*, that *in the mouth of two every word may be eſtabliſh'd*: But if any Man be ſo ſcrupulous as not to reſt in the ſentence of leſs than a *Triumvirate*, let him *in God's name*, bring in a *third*, and when his vicious *appetites* (which were before excepted to as parties) are ſet a ſide he cannot be diſtracted in his *choice*, there being but one more that can poſſibly be call'd in, and that is *Experience*, which being a *Judge* that himſelf muſt create, he cannot fear it ſhould be preiudic'd againſt him; ſo that he may entertain full confidence of its *integrity*; And no leſs may he do of its *ability*, this being the moſt infallible of humane determinations, ſuch as often corrects the *error* of *ſpeculati-*

*on*; and ſhews us the vanity of concluding what is *practicable in matter* from being *demonſtrated in the Scheme* or *Diagram*; The *guidance* of an *illiterate Traveller* in the way that he has gone, being far more uſeful to a ſtranger in his journey, than the beſt *Maps* and moſt exact deſcriptions of *Geographers*. But then it muſt be indeed *experience*, and not only ſome ſlight and tranſient Eſſay. We call not him an *experienc'd Phyſician* that has had *one Patient*, or a *Lawyer* that has pleaded *one Cauſe*. *Experience* is the Daughter of *Time*, and is made up of many *ſucceſſive trials*, as a *habit* is of *multiplied acts*: and to the *verdict* of ſuch an Experience Chriſt's Precepts will not fear to ſtand; let a Man put himſelf into a ſettled courſe of *obedience* to them, abſtain ſo long from all *prohibited commiſſions*, as may wear out the *rank taſte* wherewith his *palate* has been ſeaſon'd, and leave it free and diſengag'd, and then infallibly he will find ſuch a *ſavour* and *ſweetneſs* in thoſe *virtues*, that he will wonder how he came to be cheated into an opinion of their being *bitter* and *unſavory*; and will have no appetite to *return to his Onions and his Garlick*, after he has thus been fed with *Quails* and *Manna*. That this will be the event of this *experiment* there is all *ground of certainty*, and when the *trial* is once made, ſo irrefragable an *evidence* will follow, that it will not leave a Man the *power to doubt*: Only in the interim ſo much belief is requiſite, as may let him into the *demonſtration*, make him ſet to that Practice from whence he is to reap all this: And if any

any Man be ſo much a *Sceptick*, as not to have faith enough to put him on the adventure, I ſhould at once for his *conviction* and *puniſhment* wiſh but that he might a-while extend the ſame *diſtruſt* to Affairs of *common life*: Let him doubt whether his meat be ſavoury, and refuſe to eat; whether his *cloaths* be warm, and ſo *go naked*; whether his *houſe* be firm, and *lye without doors*: and when he has a while thus ſmarted under his own *diſcipline*, let him but apply the *wiſdom* he has thus bought to the preſent *inſtance*, and it will unqueſtionably reſolve his *ſcruple*; or if he be ſtill too impatient to attend the ripening of his own Experience, let him make uſe of other mens. Let him appeal to any who has inur'd his neck to Chriſt's yoke, and ask him whether it be *galling* and *pinching*, or whether it be not *eaſie*, nay *gracious*. Let him ask one who by repeated reſtraints hath ſubdued and tamed his *natural rage* or *pride*, how he likes the *change*, and undoubtedly he will tell him, 'tis no leſs happy than a *calm* is after the noiſe and danger of a violent *tempeſt*, or the eaſe of a broken *impoſthume* after the painful gathering and filling of it. Let him ask one who has diveſted himſelf of all his *ſenſual ſins*, whether by their *abſence* he now diſcern not their neceſſity, and he will tell them, 'tis but the ſame the Primitive *Chriſtians* had of thoſe *beaſts skins* wherein their *perſecutors* had clad them, whoſe only uſe was by *deforming* to fit them for *devouring*. Let him come to the converted *Mammoniſt*, and ask him, which he finds the better *treaſury*, his own Coffer

or the poor Man's Bowels, and he will be able to aſſure him he is become much richer by having *leſs in ſtore*. Let him come to the devout *Aſcetick*, and ask him what taſte he finds in *Daniel*'s unpleaſant *bread*, *Dan.* 10. 3. and he will tell him infinitely more than ever he did in *Dives*'s delicious fare; that cloy'd and ſurfeited the fleſh, this nouriſhes and ſupports the ſpirit. Nay, finally let him come to him that is actually *ſuffering for righteouſneſs ſake*, and he will exemplifie to him the *beatitude* which Chriſt has pronounc'd of ſuch: Let him viſit *Paul* and *Silas* in the Priſon, and he ſhall hear them *ſinging*; *Peter*, and the other Apoſtles after their ſtripes and beating, and he ſhall find them *rejoycing*; And *Stephen* amidſt the Throng of his *murderers* and Tempeſt of their *ſtones*, and he ſhall obſerve him overlooking them all, and entertaining himſelf with a more pleaſant *proſpect*, ſeeing the *Heavens open'd and Jeſus ſtanding at the right hand of God*; and why ſhould not other Mens ſucceſſes animate our endeavours here? In temporal affairs it ſeldom miſſes to do it. The Trophies of *Miltiades* at *Marathon* diſturb'd *Themiſtocles* his ſleeps, till he had rais'd unto himſelf and *Countrey* more glorious ones at *Salamine*; *Cæſar* while he views *Alexander*'s Image, upbraids his own ſlackneſs with the memory of his Conqueſts, and inſpirits himſelf to great attempts. He that returns with a rich fraight from a *new found Land* encourages others to Trade *thither* alſo: Nay, even a *beggar* ſpeeds not well at an *hoſpitable door*, but he is able to ſend *ſholes* upon

on the like hopes: Much leſs does he that has found a Treaſure need to uſe his Oratory to invite partakers; and why then ſhould thoſe few that have made this more precious diſcovery be forc'd to monopolize it as not being able to draw in Partners; Yet God knows thus it is; thoſe that hear of no rarity but they long for it, as *David* after the waters of *Bethlehem*, can yet hear the ſame *David* cry out, *how ſweet the Lord is*! and yet have no curioſity to taſte it: Thoſe whom the very name of *Liberty* ſo captivates, that they ſacrifice all that is really valuable to that *Chimera*; can hear the *Apoſtle ſpeak* of the *glorious liberty of the ſons of God* and yet like hardened *Gally ſlaves* deſpiſe the *Manumiſſion*. Thoſe that hunt after Pleaſures till the very purſuit become an inſupportable Pain, can be told of thoſe *rivers of pleaſures* wherewith God offers to quench their thirſt, and yet inflict on themſelves the *rich man's torment*, and deny ſo much as to *dip the tip of their finger* toward the *cooling* their own *flames*. Good God! what ſtrange *infatuation* is this, that while there is ſo much of vicious *envy* in the world, there ſhould be nothing of *vertuous emulation*? That Mens heat and vigour ſhould all ſpend it ſelf in childiſh purſuits, and leave them thus cold and ſtupid to their great and ſerious concernments? And what remains to him that ponders this *Epidemick* folly, but to breath out *Moſes*'s Wiſh; *O that men were wiſe*; or if that be too hopeleſs a vote, *O that men were not ſo deſtructively fooliſh*; that their raſhneſs and error might be confin'd to

their lower Inter-ſts: And as Fools are treated, *be kept from dealing in things of conſequence*; that they would not govern their Souls by ſuch an abſurd kind of managery, as they will not truſt with the meaneſt of their outward concerns. And if this might be obtained, if this fatal *Oſcitancy* which has benumb'd and frozen them were but *caſt off*, they would then from the report of the *good land*, be animated to their *journey*; and rather chuſe to make the concurrent teſtimonies of others arguments to encourage them, than *leave* them as Hand-writings to *appeal*, or Witneſſes to *condemn* them. And he that ſhall thus borrow other Men's *experience* with this deſign of *copying it out*, and lays it as a foundation for his own, thereby poſſeſſes himſelf of one of the greateſt *advantages* of the *Communion of Saints*; kindles himſelf at their *fire* till he grows bright and hot at it; combines his *flame* with theirs, and ſo encreaſes the Ardors of them both; follows Example till himſelf grows exemplary, and in one Act *receives* and *gives*. But he that thus ſets out, muſt remember that it is more than the journey of one day he has to go; he muſt not think (as I ſaid before) that every little *ſuperficial attempt* is that Experience which he is in queſt of: He that thus phanſies will be expos'd to a very dangerous deceit, for 'tis ſure there is in all habits ſuch a *force*, that they are not to be diſpoſſeſt but by a contrary violence, and therefore he that has been under the power of any vicious *cuſtom*, enters at firſt into a ſtate of *hoſtility*, has ſuch a tough *oppoſition*,

as

as rather finds him work than pleaſure: Now if he ſhall upon this firſt Eſſay pronounce, he is like to paſs a very *unjuſt ſentence*: Let him fight on a while, till he have got ſome ground, and then though the War afforded him little Pleaſure, the Victory will yield him much. Every repeated defeat he gives his adverſary, will be a new triumph to him, and what the *Romans* courted as ſo great a Dignity, he may every day enjoy. But then as he advances farther to the compleating of his *Victories*, ſo he does of his *Pleaſures* too: when his irregular Appetites are ſo ſubdued, that they rarely make Inſurrection, this is ſuch a ſtate of *tranquility* as gives him leiſure to diſcern, and enjoy the delights of Chriſtian Vertue, and will teach him to reproach the higheſt *Panegyrick* he ever heard of it as flat and imperfect: ſo infinitely will he find it exceed the utmoſt *deſcription*, that he will ſay with the Queen of *Sheba*, *the one half was not told him.* This is the rich prize which they ſhall obtain that run the Race, but it is not awarded to the *firſt ſtep*; and hence it is ſo many fail of it, that when they find the uneaſineſs which attends the breaking off a Cuſtom; this is ſuch a Gyant, a ſon of *Anak*, as turns them back diſcourag'd from the *Canaan* they went to view. But alas, this diſcovers how ſmall a ſtock of Reſolution they carried out with them; for where Men ſet out with Heart and Appetite, 'tis not ſuch little *difficulties* that will diſmay them: if it be but their *ſports* they are ingag'd in, it ſerves to deceive the ſenſe of many uneaſineſſes, nay often

dangers,

dangers, he that is but in chaſe of a ſilly *Hare* is ſo keen upon it, that he feels not the wearineſs of a whole days motion; and if he meet with a *hedge* in his way will rather leap it with hazard, than be diverted from his Game. But 'tis ſure in their ſins they ſuffer far greater hardſhips without diſcouragement. The puny *drunkard* is not diſheartned by the firſt *qualm*, but repeats his *exceſſes* till he have overcome his *queaſineſs*. The caſt *Litigant* ſits not down with one *croſs Verdict*, but recommences his *ſuit*, paſſes it through all Courts, and conſiders not his own *pains*, ſo he may either weary or force the other out of his *right*. The *unclean perſon* falls not out with his ſin, how ſadly ſoever it hath macerated him, but ſteps out of the *Hot houſe* into the *Stews*. And ſhall men be ſo indefatigable in their purſuits of *infelicity*, buy one *torment* with another, and drive on the year in a circle of ſuch woful Trafick; and ſhall *vertue* and *pleaſure* be thought not worth the ſmalleſt *labour*? Can they keep themſelves in a *perpetual contention* with their *eaſe*, their *reaſon*, and their *God*; and can they not endure a ſhort *combate* with a ſinful *cuſtom*? which if it have ſome *uneaſineſs*, yet 'tis both infinitely ſhort of what they have ſuffer'd in the contrary compliance, and beſides carries its remedy in its hand: For if the difficulty ariſe only (as doubtleſs it does) from the confirm'dneſs of the Habit, every act of a reſiſtance, as it weakens the Habit, ſo it abates the Difficulty. It is therefore a moſt unreaſonable inference, from the trouble of the firſt oppoſi-

tion,

tion, to conclude the impossibility of the future; for if the first were but troublesome and not impossible, the second will have yet less of the trouble, and so be yet farther remov'd from impossibility, and the third than the second, and so on till the difficulty vanish and disappear. And if Men would but assume such a *moderate courage*, as but to keep the Field, and not to run away upon the first Gun-shot, they would soon find how impotent assailants they had to deal with, who can never subdue any Man by strength, who is not first emasculated by his own fears. Let us therefore, to shun the report of so dishonourable a Defeat, awake and rouze our selves, put us in a posture of defence: And *Satan* who is as cowardly as any thing in the world but we, will, as St. *James* assures us, *flee from us*. Let us upbraid our selves with our unseasonable hardiness and resolution in our Impieties till we have chang'd the Scene, grow impatient of those servile drudgeries and ambitious of those *honourable adventures*. And to animate us the more, let us fix our eyes upon the glorious prize of the *victory*; and that not only the final and eternal in future Glory; but that intermediate which offers it self as the earnest of That: the calm and pleasure of a conquering Piety. The *Roman* story tells us, that the *Flavianists* had so possest their minds with the spoils of *Vienna*, that they grew insensible of all dangers in the way to it, and even forc'd their General *Antonio* to put them upon those hazards which his wiser Conduct would have declin'd. And why

should

ſhould not our more worthy *hopes* excite as great an earneſtneſs? Why ſhould not we have as great an Appetite to the pillaging of *Satan*'s *Camp*, plundering that infernal *Magazine* of all its *Engines* both of *Mine* and *Battery*, its ſtores of *Arms* and *Ammunition*, leaving him naked and defenceleſs, unable to make any impreſſion upon us? And this he certainly does, who by a ſteddy practice of *Vertue*, comes to diſcern the contemptibleneſs of thoſe baits wherewith he allures us. He that ſeeks only the *Praiſe of God*, looks upon the *applauſe* of *men* as a blaſt of Air, which poſſibly may demoliſh and deſtroy a *glorious building*, but cannot give *foundation* or *materials* to it; and therefore will not ſeek for, or ſolicite its unhappy Courtſhips. He who deſires to be *great* only *in the kingdom of Heaven*, laughs at the *buſie aſpirings of ſecular greatneſs*, and wonders at the force of that *enchantment*, which engages Men with ſo extream toil, to climb a tottering *Pinacle*, where the ſtanding is uneaſie, and the fall deadly. He that covets to be *rich towards God*, and has inur'd his eyes to that *divine ſplendor* which reſults from the *beauty of holineſs*, is not dazled with the *glittering ſhine of Gold*; conſiders it as a *vein* of the ſame *earth* he treads on, and deſpiſes that abſurd Partiality whereof the Prophet accuſes *Idolaters*, to employ one part to the meaneſt uſes, and fall down to the other. In a word, he that looks on the *eternal things that are not ſeen*, will through thoſe *opticks* exactly diſcern the *vanity* and *inconſiderateneſs* of all that is

*viſible*

*viſible* and *temporary*; and ſo will be equally unmoved with the terrors or allurements of the world, and neither frighted nor flatter'd out of his duty. And he that is thus fortified, diſcourages and wearies out his Tempter, deprives him not only of *Weapons* but of *Heart* too, and drives even *Satan* himſelf to deſperation; and when the Enemy is thus beat out of the Field, there remains nothing but to enjoy the *victory*. When that *reluctance* and *reſiſtance* of the *corrupt Appetite* is ſo weakned and ſubdued, that a Man acts with *freedom*, he acts with *pleaſure too*. A *heart* thus *ſet at liberty*, alacriouſly *runs the ways of God's Commandments*: it faring with it as with a *Patient* that is preſcrib'd *exerciſe* for *health*; who at firſt perhaps finds *laſſitude* and *trouble* in it: but when the obſtructions are remov'd, and Nature disburdened of thoſe *noxious humours* that encumbred her, that which was at firſt his task, becomes his Recreation. For we are not to think, that it is any innate harſhneſs in Piety that renders the firſt eſſays of it unpleaſant; that is owing only to the indiſpoſedneſs of our own Hearts. We are in the prophet's phraſe, *Bullocks unaccuſtomed to the yoke*; and if we be galled and fretted by it, 'tis becauſe of our impatient ſtrivings, and irregular motions under it, the yoke is really no heavier than it is afterwards, when it is more tamely born; and yet the Eaſe is very different and unequal. And this teaches us a ſhort way to that felicity we now ſpeak of, to wit, That we compoſe our ſelves to ſuch a ſubmiſs and malleable

temper

temper, that Chriſt may come only to govern us as ſheep, not to be put to tame us as *Tigers*. Let us withdraw all ſupplies from our *luſts*, and not by any ſecret reſerved affection give them clancular aids to maintain their *Rebellion*, and then they will not be able long to make any *vigorous oppoſition*, nor conſequently much to diſturb the tranquility of thoſe who have thus reſign'd themſelves to the government of the *Prince of Peace*: And if this cannot be done in ſuch an inſtant, but that there will be ſome previous diſplacencies, and uneaſie ſtruglings, yet even thoſe like the *Scorpion*, carry an Antidote againſt their own *Stings*, when 'tis conſider'd, that they are but the *pangs* of the *new birth*, they will become very ſupportable by the expectation of that joy to which they tend. An enſlaved People think themſelves fairly advanc'd to happineſs, if they can get but to make head againſt their oppreſſors, though they muſt expect many ſore *conflicts* and ſharp *engagements* before they become *Victors*: and certainly 'tis matter of ineſtimable joy to him, who has been under that ſad ſpiritual ſlavery, to be ſet thus upon even terms, with his ſword in his hand againſt thoſe, who once had him in ſuch vaſſalage, that he durſt not lift up a thought againſt them; but eſpecially when 'tis remembred with what *invincible aids* he is backt ſuch as will aſcertain him of *victory*, if he do not treacherouſly defeat himſelf. And ſurely he muſt be of a ſtrange *phlegmatick temper*, whom all theſe conſiderations will not enliven, convey in

to him ſo much ſpirit as to make an attempt, and engage him to do that upon ſo preſſing, ſo great a concern, which meer curioſity prompts Men daily to in common affairs. And he that is not moulded of this cold and ſtubborn clay, he that has not loſt one of the *elements* of Man's compoſition, and has but a ſpark of fire in his temper, will ſurely have ſome *warmth* towards this ſo inviting an *experiment*: and when he has once made it, I doubt not it will then joyn with the ſuffrages both of reaſon and conſcience in approbation of *Chriſt*'s *Laws*, and will with *Solomon* pronounce of this ſpiritual wiſdom, *Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace, Prov.* 3. 17.

AND now it muſt be a ſtrange *violence* of impiety that muſt break this *three-fold cord*, that ſhall diſannul the joynt *ſentence* of all that are competent *Judges* in this matter. This is not the ſtrength of *Sampſon* that *brake withs and cords*, but of the *Legion that pull'd in pieces Fetters and Chains*; and though too many Men make it their *own work*, yet certainly 'tis only the *Devil*'s *intereſt*: he aſpires to the rule and government of us; and to that end nothing can be more contributive, than theſe prejudices we take up againſt Chriſt's conduct. A *Soul* like a *Nation*, can neither bear *two Legiſlators*, nor be without *One*: and *Satan* having but that ſingle competitor, our quarrelling with Chriſt's Laws, is virtually an embracing of his. When we ſend *Chriſt* that rebellious meſſage; *Nolumus*

*hunc*

*hunc regnare*, we ſay to the other as the *Trees* to the *Bramble*, *Judg.* 9. 14. *come thou and reign over us.* And to this defiance of the one, and invitation of his oppoſite, he very nearly approaches, that thus defames Chriſt's Commands as irrational or ſevere. The traducing of a Government being, we know, the immediate *præludium* to the caſting it off; *libelling* the forlorn hope to Rebellion. But would God men would ſoberly weigh whither ſuch a mutinous humour tends; and when our outward *condition* has given us ſo many pregnant and coſtly proofs of its ruinous effects, take caution that it make not the like wrack within us: that we do not madly exchange Chriſt's *gentle ſervice* and *glorious rewards*, for Satan's *cruel bondage*, and crueller *wages*: the *golden chains* of the one which do more adorn than tie us, for the *Iron*, the *Adamantine* Link of the other, which bind us till they deliver us over to thoſe *Chains of Darkneſs*, where our captivity ſhall be irreverſible. If this ſo reaſonable, ſo neceſſary a care, may be admitted, 'twill certainly confute the prophane *Sophiſtry* of our Age, ſilence our impious *Cavils*, and inſtead of providing us of the colour of an auſtere Maſter to excuſe our ſloth, will engage us to that diligence that ſhall ſuperſede the uſe of ſuch *ſhifts*, and then we may hope to ſee *Chriſtianity* have a *Reſurrection-Day* again, aſſume a Body ſomewhat of ſolidity and ſubſtance; which now wanders about like a *Ghoſt* or *Spectre*, a *Shade* or vaniſhing *Apparition*, which leaves no footſteps behind it: and to the re union, O let us all emu-

louſly

louſly contribute, take up every one of us his dry *bones*, and bring them to the *Prophet*, or rather to *Him* who ſpake by that Prophet, to breath upon them, till at laſt they be cemented and inſpirited in active *duty*, to ſhew forth the *Praiſes of that God who hath call'd us out of darkneſs into his marvellous light*, 1 Pet. 2. 9.

## CHAP. VI.

### *A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Partial Obedience.*

ANOTHER ſort of prepoſterous Conſiderers there are, by whom the *power and force of Chriſtianity* is no leſs obſtructed: and thoſe are they that contrive not how they may moſt *comply* with *it*, but how they may beſt bend it to *comport* with *them*, that rebate its edge or turn it only againſt ſuch of their corruptions as they have leaſt kindneſs for. That weigh the *precepts* with no other deſign but that of taking the *lighteſt*: Thoſe to which their conſtitutions or other circumſtances carry leaſt repugnance; and come unto the *Goſpel* not as to a *Law*, but to a *Market*; cheapen what they beſt like, and leave the reſt for other cuſtomers.

THAT thus it is with many, needs no other proof than the variety viſible in the lives of ſeveral profeſſors. *One* man behaves himſelf *mo-*

*deſtly*, and tells you his *religion* commands him *humility*; yet at the ſame time tranſgreſſes the as ſtrict precept of Juſtice, and will defraud him he bows to. On the contrary *another* is Juſt, but inſolent, and though his Sentence do not bend, expects his *Clients* ſhould. That man owns the purity of his religion in *viſiting the Fatherleſs and Widows*, yet diſclaims it again, by not *keeping himſelf unſpotted of the world*. This perſon is Abſtemious, but Uncharitable, will drink no *wine*, but thirſts for *bloud*. He prays much, yet curſes more; whileſt he is meek, but indevout. Now while the Rule is one and the ſame, how ſhould it come, that mens Practices ſhould ſo vary, were it not for the unequal Application? did they take it intire, though there might be difference in the *degrees*, yet ſure not in the *kinds* of their Virtues, and as men would not differ ſo from one another, ſo neither would they from themſelves; there would be then no ſuch thing as a *charitable* Drunkard, a *devout* Oppreſſor, a *chaſt* Miſer; *Monſters* engendred by this unnatural commixture of *light* with *darkneſs*; but *piety* would be uniform and extenſive, and *bring into captivity every thought unto the obedience of Chriſt*, 2 *Cor.* 10. 5. And till it be thus, *Chriſtianity* can never be thought to have atchiev'd any part of its deſign which was not aim'd againſt any one *ſingle limb*, but againſt the *whole body* of ſin. Alas! 'tis not the lopping off one of the remote *members*, that will render the remaining ones any whit the leſs vital; the having a *part* leſs to animate,

mate, will rather ſerve to concenter the ſpirits, and make them more active in the reſt: as we ſee the *pruning* of Trees makes them more *prolifick*. And this effect is very obvious among men: he who has no general diſlike to vice, if he repudiate *one*, 'tis commonly that he may cleave cloſer to *another*; and what he defaulks from ſome *dry*, *inſipid* ſin, is but to make up a *Benjamin*'s Meſs for ſome other more guſtful. If the Wanton be *ſober*, 'tis odds he thinks *exceſs* a Rival to his *luſt*; if the Proud Man be *liberal*, 'tis becauſe *covetouſneſs* is inglorious: ſuch unevenneſſes are caus'd not by an *unkindneſs* to any ſin (unleſs poſſibly that averſion which natural conſtitution raiſes in ſome) but by a *partiality* to one or more favourite Vices, for whoſe better accomodation, and ſecurer reign, not only Virtue, but other Vices alſo muſt give place.

AND this 'tis much to be fear'd will upon a true account, be found to be the ſumm of many mens *piety*, ſomething they think they muſt pay to the *importunity* of their Religion, which upbraids them ſo loudly, that they are willing to *ſtop its mouth*, but yet would do it with as much *frugality*, and good managery as may be, and ſo conſider what 'tis they can beſt ſpare; what refuſe Sin which brings them in little of ſatisfaction, and is perhaps in competition with ſome other more agreeable: and *this* they can be content to devote to the *ſlaughter*, ſet it to receive all the *impreſſions of the ſword of the Spirit*; and ſo uſe it as a *buckler* to their *darling luſts*, to ward off thoſe

blows which muſt elſe fall heavy upon them; but alas! this is not to *obey*, but to *delude*; to ranſom a *greater* Sin with a *leſs*, and to tranſcribe in this matter the Counſel of *Caiaphas*: to *let one die for the people, that the whole Nation periſh not*. To make one forlorn guilt a Patriot to the reſt, whilſt in the *tempeſt* which threatned a general *ſhipwrack*, the *precious wares* are preſerv'd, by throwing the *leſs valuable* over-board.

AND truly that is commonly the event; men are ſo jolly and triumphant when they have worſted a *trivial inconſiderable ſin*, as if they had defeated the *whole army*: this poor deſpicable *ſpoil* is ſet up as their *Trophy*, and muſt, they think, witneſs for them both to God and man, that they are *good ſouldiers of Jeſus Chriſt*: they can, like *Saul*, with full confidence meet the *Prophet*, and tell him they have *fulfilled the commandment of the Lord*, 2 *Sam.* 15. 13. though *Agag* and the beſt *cattle*, the reigning and fatteſt *ſins* be ſpar'd: and while they are thus ſecure, their ſins will certainly be ſo alſo, have no diſturbance or diſquiet from them, but lie at eaſe and reſt, feed like *Canibals* upon their own kind, be nouriſht by the carkaſſes of thoſe unlucky vices, on whom the exterminating lot hapned to fall; and by that means grow to a prodigious bulk and corpulency. And upon theſe terms *Satan* himſelf will allow us to *mortifie ſome ſins*, nay will himſelf *caſt the firſt ſtone at them*: and like a rooking *gameſter* purpoſely loſe theſe *petty ſtake*,, that he may afterwards ſweep the *board*.

FOR

FOR if Men ſhould give themſelves up univerſally to *all ſorts* of Ill, if they ſhould ſet themſelves in a total oppoſition to *all the documents* of their *profeſſion*, he would loſe one of his moſt uſeful *engins*; there could be no ſuch thing as a falſe deluſive hope, they might poſſibly by obſtinacy *harden*, or by diverſion *gag* Conſcience, but they could not bribe and corrupt it, make it ſit down well p'eas'd and ſatisfied with it ſelf. For when the *threats* againſt diſobedience ſhall occur to the mind of one who has in all inſtances diſobey'd, 'tis impoſſib'e he ſhould find any *ſalve*, any way of evading the Threats, they make ſo directly at him: but he who can alledge for himſelf that he *obeys in ſome things*, confronts that to all Objections, and reſolves he is not *in the liſt* of the *diſobedient*: One or two ſuch comfortable inſtances are as mighty, as God promis'd the *Iſraelites* ſhould be, *Deut.* 32.30 *One able to chaſe a thouſand, and two to put ten thouſand to flight*; all fears and miſgiving thoughts are diſſipated and fled before them: and as once the *French King* in his return to the numerous ſwelling titles of the *Spaniard*, thought the bare repetition of *France, France, France*, was a full ballance to them all; ſo when *whole files* of great and ſcandalous Crimes preſent themſelves, *one ſingle virtue* is thought a ſufficient counterpoize. He whoſe Conſcience upbraids him with all Profaneneſs towards *God*, and Inſobriety towards *himſelf*: yet if he can but anſwer, that he is *juſt to his Neighbour*, he thinks he has *quit ſcores*,

and fears no farther reckonings: he who is immerſt in all the *filthineſs* both of *fleſh* and *Spirit*, has abandon'd his Mind to *pride and envy*, his Body to *luſt and intemperance*; and ſo ſacrificed both thoſe to *Devils*: yet if he caſt but *ſome grains* of his eſtate upon the Altar; devote any *ſmall part* of that to God, for the uſes of *Piety* or *Charity*; he concludes, that *Incenſe* will ſend up a Cloud thick enough to obſcure the other from the *eyes* of Divine Juſtice, and yield ſo ſweet a ſavour, as will perfume him in ſpight of all that noiſomneſs: ſo extending old *Tobit's* words beyond his meaning, that *alms, though alone, delivereth from death, and cleanſeth from all ſin.* He who is deep in *ſacrilege* and *rebellion*, that can daringly ſwallow repeated deliberate *perjuries*; yet if he can get but the demure tenderneſs, to *fear a ſudden death*, he is *Chymiſt* enough to extract a *confidence* out of that *fear*, and preſumes that *formal* Civility to God's name, ſhall expiate all the *real* Violations and Contempts of him: and while men make ſuch uſe of their *partial peace meal* obedience, it can never be the *Devil's intereſt* to diſturb them *in* it, to awake them out of their pleaſant dream, or to exact *of* them to depoſite thoſe poor inſignificant *remains* of their Chriſtianity, which ſerve only to make them more *Supine*, not more *Safe*.

NAY, indeed his affairs are ſo ſtated, that to ſome he can and does, and without danger, allow a yet far *greater indulgence*; he can permit them to bid much fairer than this for Heaven, and

yet

yet knows the purchaſe is far from being made; he can ſee them caſhier not ſome one *ſingle ſin*, but *whole troops* together, and yet not fear the ſinking of his Cauſe: He can truſt them ſo far, that as the *young man* in the Goſpel, they may be pronounc'd, *Not far from the Kingdom of God:* yet as long as there is but *one* unmortified Luſt, that can ſend them away *ſad from Chriſt*, his tenure is firm enough. *Herod may hear John Baptiſt gladly*, nay, do many things upon it, yet let him but keep *Herodias*, and ſhe will ſoon be able to ſecure both *her ſelf* and *Satan* againſt the danger of that Competition. This is indeed his main advantage, that he can hold faſt by the *ſmalleſt thread*; and whereas to our bliſs a conſpiration and union of all Virtues is required; our *ruine* can ſpring from any *one* ſolitary Crime: *many rounds* make that Ladder wherewith we muſt ſcale *Heaven*: whereas *one ſtep* ſerves to precipitate us into the *Abyſſe*; ſo ſadly verifying the Poetical Axiom, *Facilis deſcenſus Averni.* In ſumm, while there is but *any one ſingle ſin* indulg'd to, that is the *Devil's tedder*; and though it ſhould be imagin'd ſo looſe, as to give men ſcope to range over *all other ſorts* of Virtues, to taſte the ſweet, and feed liberally on them; yet ſtill the *beaſt* is in the power of him who has fix'd the line not only to be finally led away to *ſlaughter*, but alſo to have the *length ſhortned*, and be either put out of the *reach*, or quite removed from the *view* of thoſe *pleaſant paſtures.*

FOR though the ſecurity rais'd by ſuch an un-

uniform piety is in many ſo exactly apportioned to *Satan's intereſt*, that he has no cauſe to wiſh the change of his tenure; yet where the circumſtances are ſuch, as will make it uſeful, he can eaſily twiſt his *thread* into a *Cable*. When he thinks one *Monarch* Luſt too mild a regiment, he can ſet up an *Athenian* Tyranny, or which is yet worſe, let in the whole *populacy* of Sin upon the Soul, which like the *Ægyptian Locuſts* ſhall over-run and devour it, *not leave any green thing on the ground*, and that this is in his power we have too much reaſon to conclude. He is, we know, a cunning *ſophiſter*, and if he has abus'd us ſo far as to impoſe *one* ſin upon us, he may thence very regularly deduce *many more*; as *one* falſe Premiſe admitted, may be improved into *thouſands* of falſe Concluſions. Indeed ſuppoſing a man reſolute to adhere to one ſin, he may with very good *Logick* perſwade him to multitudes of others. There are but two *Objections* uſually made to any Temptation; either the *offence*, or the *danger*; and theſe are uſually objectable to one ſin as well as to another: ſo that this *dilemma* readily offers it ſelf: Either it is reaſonable to buy a *pleaſure* at that price, or it is not: If it be, then contrive that the *crime* be pleaſant, and that brings its *diſpenſation* with it: If it be not, then why doſt thou live in this one ſin in deſpight of both guilt and puniſhment? The *latter* part of the *Dilemma* 'tis no part of Satan's buſineſs to preſs; but the former he has too much advantage of purſuing ſucceſsfully; if he can but

dreſs

dreſs up a temptation to look invitingly, the buſineſs is done. So ridiculous a thing is an uneven *Piety*, that it even laughs it ſelf out of countenance, and wants only temptation to become *uniform Vice*. How abſurdly looks it, to ſee a man run away with *Joſeph* from the embraces of his *Miſtreſs*, and yet with full as great a ſpeed accompany *Gehazi* in the purſuit of a *bribe*; and how obvious it is to conclude that the former aſſault was improſperous only becauſe not manag'd with the *right weapon*; that he might have been *hir'd*, that would not be *wooed*? What a *mockery* is it for a man to be *zealous for God*? and *rebellious againſt his King*? As in the reverſe, for a man to be *true to his King*, and a *rebel to his God*? And who can but think, that had either of the averted *Crimes* been cookt to their *Palats*, they might have chang'd *Meſſes*? Indeed 'tis not imaginable by what rules of diſcourſe, he that embraces *one ſin* ſhould reject *another*: if it be done only upon *fancy* and *humor*, as the *repulſt vice* will have reaſon to complain of great *partiality*, when as bad as it ſelf is receiv'd and cheriſh'd; ſo it points out a way to attacque him more proſperouſly: let it ſhape it ſelf to the phancy; and ſure *Satan*, who can *transform himſelf to an Angel of light*, can ſoon work that eaſie *change*: let the *younger* Brother get on the cloaths of the favourite *Eſau*, transform it ſelf into the ſhape and intereſt of the darling ſin, and it need not doubt of a free admiſſion. But all this while to pretend *conſcience* for ſuch an *abſtinence*, is of all other pleas the moſt abſurd; for why

why ſhould he ſcruple at one, that abandons himſelf to another? as S. *James* argues concerning the *guilt*, ſo may we for the *act* of Sin: He that ſaid, *Do not commit adultery*, ſaid alſo, *Do not kill*; and 'tis abuſive mockery, the Souldiers *Ave Rex*, to bow to his *authority* in the *one*, and reſiſt it in the *other*. Thus unhappy is the caſe of him who entertains one ſin, his encloſure is broken down, and he's a Common for all: he is left deſtitute of reply to any temptation, and like a *baſhful* perſon, will be in danger of *yielding*, becauſe he is aſham'd to *deny*: and this I doubt not, many have found experimentally true; ſome ſins have been committed not ſo much upon the force of inclination, as to be conſentaneous to themſelves, to ſilence the upbraidings of their underſtandings for acting ſo unevenly, it being impoſſible to give a reaſonable account; why *this* and not *that*, or *that*; for when by *one bold wilful ſin* a man is enter'd into a *ſtate of hoſtility* with God, 'tis not a *tenderneſs in all others* will make up the *breach*: and then they think the rule of known enemies takes place, where all civilities are diſclaim'd, and the quarrel manag'd to the moſt advantage. The reſolv'd *Adulterer* could perhaps without much difficulty be juſt; but when he conſiders that that one *Helena* of his will certainly make a war, he thinks 'tis an impertinent *niceneſs* to loſe a good prize, or diſmiſs his *covetouſneſs* while he reſolves to retain his *luſt*. The incorrigible *drunkard* could perchance eaſily enough be *chaſte*, but when he remembers that *drunkenneſs excludes*

*cludes him from the Kingdom of Heaven*: having made that ſale of his eternal inheritance, he thinks 'tis but good husbandry to get as much as he can for it: So *treacherous a gueſt* is any *one Sin* admitted, and lodg'd in the heart, it deſpoils it of all its armour of defence, leaves it nothing wherewith to guard it ſelf againſt any aſſailant; and be it *never ſo ſmall* a one, 'tis like thoſe *little thieves*, which being put in at the window, ſet the doors open to all the reſt.

BUT perhaps this *danger* may be thought in ſome degree warded by the *natural temper* and conſtitution of men, which neceſſarily renders them unapt to *contradictory vices*, and ſo will ſecure them at leaſt from ſo many as are diſagreeable to their Temper: but if this ſhould be granted, yet it confeſſedly leaves them open to all others, and that were certainly bad enough: he that is as *wicked*, as his *complexion* cannot only encline but permit him to be, will not want much of the utmoſt number of ſins: but whatever we can ſuppoſe that to ſtrike off from the tale; yet in the ſecond place, 'tis very much to be fear'd, that will defaulk nothing of the weight; he that ſins to the height of his *appetite*, perhaps *power*, ſhall he be ever the more *innocent*, becauſe there were ſome *nauſeated ſins*, which he had not Self-denial enough to commit? God abſolves us in proportion to the *rectitude* of our Wills, not the *niceneſs* of our Complexions: he that wills to purſue whatever he can find *guſtful*, how impious ſoever; ſhall it be *virtue* in him that ſome Sins are

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*unſavoury* and diſagreeing to his *Palate*? If it ſhould, there may ſo many extrinſick things be by Analogy brought in, either to ſwell or abate the accounts of our ſin, that we ſhall be much to ſeek in the eſtimate of it.

BUT in the third place even theſe very averſions are no infallible preſervative; for if they happen to be more moderate and remiſs, than the love of ſome other ſin; that *predominant inclination* will ſubdue thoſe *diſlikes*, when ever its *intereſt* is to be ſerv'd by thoſe otherwiſe not *guſtful commiſſions*. There is nothing more ordinary than to ſee one appetite purſued to the violation of another. A man perhaps hates *drunkenneſs*, not only as a *beſtial* but *uneaſie vice*; yet if his *love* to Gain exceed his *diſlike* to that; when that is requiſite to make up the price of a *good bargain*, that *averſion* muſt ſtoop, and give way. A Man deſpiſes *ſwearing* as an *inſipid impertinent ſin*; yet if he ſet any great value upon *being in the mode*, and complying with the *gentile Dialect*, that will ſoon debaſe him to what he ſo much contemn'd: and truly there is ſcarce any other account to be given of that great and fooliſh ſin. But in no other inſtance is this ſo notoriouſly viſible, as in that of *duelling*. I need not ſingle out any one mans particular *inclination*: the nature of mankind doth certainly avert both killing and being kill'd: yet when that *Phantaſm*, that *Chimæra* honour, has once poſſeſt the mind, no reluctance of humanity is able to make head againſt it; but it commands as uncon-

troul'dly

troul'dly, as the *Centurion* in the Goſpel, *ſays to this man go and he goes, to another come and he comes*: nay as tyrannically as the great *Cham* of *Tartary*, who as an Eſſay of his Soveraignty *commands whole troops to ride down precipices*; nay theſe Averſions are not only thus violently ſubdued by ſome foreign *luſt*, but are many times deſtroy'd even by *force* of that very *vicious principle* which gave them *birth*; for we miſtake if we think they are always virtuous, or ſo much as innocently founded; Vice is often at civil wars with it ſelf; and the vehement *inclination* to one, ingenders a *diſplacency* to another; but yet ſuch a *riddle* is this *myſtery of Iniquity*, that upon the very ſame *baſis* is built both the *abhorrence* and *commiſſion* of the ſame Sin. For *example*, a Proud Man as much hates to *fawn* and *flatter others*, as he loves to be flatter'd himſelf; yet let his *pride* but once work the other way, and ſet him upon an *ambitious project*, then all the mean condeſcentions imaginable are with eaſe digeſted, he can crouch and proſtrate, and as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks, *fall down and humble himſelf*, that by that deſcent he may rebound to the height he aims at: but ſtill pride is the common cauſe of theſe ſo diſtant effects. In like manner the Riotous Prodigal deteſts *covetouſneſs*, looks upon it as ſo ſordid and baſe, that he brands even *prudent frugality* as approaching too near it; yet let him but once find the *ſprings* to grow dry which ſhould feed his *luxury*; when he feels his Riot begins to exhauſt and prey upon it ſelf, then

then even that *deſpiſed Covetouſneſs* ſhall be call'd in to its aid, to dig *metal* for the Furnace to melt, and ſo by a ſtrange *Antiperiſtaſis*, *prodigality* ſhall beget *rapin*. Thus unhappily *prolifick* is every Sin, that it carries in its bowels the *ſeed* and *principle* even of thoſe that ſeem the moſt *Heterogeneous*; and then how ſhall a man that has admitted but any one ſuch teeming luſt be ſecur'd that it ſhall not thus propagate, till his *Soul* become a mere *deſart*, fill'd with all ſorts of *wild* and *noxious creatures*.

THERE is but *one hope* imaginable to interpoſe, and that is that *God's grace* ſhall prevent this exorbitant *growth of impiety* in him, and I acknowledge that is ſufficient to do it, where it may have its kindly *operation*; but where it has ſo, it will uniformly ſuppreſs all ſin, and therefore where *any one* continues in force and vigour, 'tis manifeſt that *operation* of Grace is obſtructed, and ſuch a man I ſhould deſire ſoberly to conſider what aſſurance he has, that he who has ſo evacuated God's grace in one inſtance, ſhall not do ſo in another? If *in ſpight* of that grace he can be luſtful, why ſhall he not be as able to reſiſt it *in favour* of Drunkenneſs, Sacrilege, Rebellion, or any other crime to which he ſhall at any time have appetite? Can he imagine that God ſends forth an irreſiſtible ſtrength againſt ſome ſins, whilſt in others he permits men a power of repelling his *Grace*? That were to tranſcribe the *Syrians* abſurd phanſie, that he is *a God of the hills and not of the valleys*: No certainly, he who has his own

unhappy

unhappy experience to atteſt the poſſibility of fruſtrating the Divine ſuccours in one particular, has too ſure grounds to infer the like in others, Nay alas, it does not only infer it by way of *argument* and *deduction*, but it is very apt to produce it by way of *cauſe* and *efficiency*: We gain a readineſs to any thing by cuſtom and aſſuefaction, and he who has habitually oppos'd *Grace* in the defence of a *Luſt*, has deliver'd himſelf from that modeſty which makes the firſt defiance uneaſie, and ſo runs on with eaſe and boldneſs to future reſiſtance. It fares with men in this violation of *God's Grace*, as it does in that of his *Patrimony*, the firſt Sacrilege is lookt on with ſome horror, and men are fain to deviſe *arguments* and colours to delude their reluctating *Conſciences*; but when they have once made the breach, their ſcrupuloſity ſoon retires; one draught of that *impious gain*, has ſuch a *ſtupefying effect*, that they can without check ſwallow on, till the Sin flame ſo fiercely, that nothing but mere want of Matter can extinguiſh it. But admit it were poſſible for a man to be ſecur'd of his own compliance with ſome part of reſtraining grace whileſt he impugnes it in others, yet who ſhall aſcertain him of that grace? It being God's, implies 'tis not in our power, he may ſurely do what he will with his own, and though his *promiſe* has made a ſure *entail* of it to all thoſe, who *humbly ſeek* and *diligently uſe* it: yet it no where engages that it ſhall be the *portion* of any other; much leſs that it ſhall importunately and endleſly renew its aſſaults on

thoſe

thoſe who have often repulſt and put it to flight: In that caſe *God's reſolution* concerning the *old world*, becomes applicable, *My ſpirit ſhall not always ſtrive with man*; and *Chriſt* who forbids us to *caſt our pearls before Swine*, will certainly never proſtitute what is infinitely more precious, his *Grace* to thoſe, who have ſo long trampled it under their feet; and ſo thoſe muſt be concluded to have done, who have perſevered in any one ſin; for Grace is uniformly oppoſite to all, and therefore the cleaving to any is defiance and affront to it. But we need not the help of inferences and deduction, the threats of God are expreſs in ths matter: The *Talent* is decreed to be taken from the *unprofitable ſervant*, who has not employed it to the proper uſe, and ſuch infallibly is *every man* who has not actuated the *Grace* given him to the ſubduing of every *reigning ſin*; and the *reprobate mind* mention'd in Scripture as the moſt diſmal of all Plagues, the νῦς ἀδόκιμος, which yields not to the melting and the purging force of Fire, and therefore does conſign to that of Hell, is founded upon the voluntary rejection of God in particular inſtances, *Rom.* 1. How then can he, that in any one ſingle thing ſo rejects him, aſſure himſelf that ſhall not be the event of it? That he who would not have Chriſt rule entirely in his *heart*, ſhall at once be put out of his *government* and *protection?* have all thoſe ſpiritual aids withdrawn, which ſhould either aſſiſt him to *good*, or fortifie him againſt *ill*; and like an out-law'd perſon be expos'd to the outrage of all that will aſſault him.

AND

AND now would God this might be ſadly pondered, that Men would not be their own *Sirens*, and entertain themſelves with thoſe deceitful *melodies*, which will end in *howlings and gnaſhings of teeth*; they that would not think their having ſome few Vertues, and but ſome few Vices will ſerve to ſatisfie the deſign, or procure them the rewards of their Chriſtianity: for if they ſhould continue in this poſture, and not be tempted to grow worſe, they may certainly conclude, 'tis becauſe Satan finds they need not. And can they be *proud* of that Vertue which the Devil himſelf will allow them? And think themſelves *good* enough when they are as bad as he wiſhes them? But even in this they have no other tenure than his Will. When he pleaſes for his intereſt, or even for his divertiſement and recreation, he may hurry them to all that is moſt enormous; convert their *Hypocriſie* to *prophaneneſs*, their *partial* Piety to *univerſal* Ungodlineſs; they have nothing to interpoſe in their own Defence, not ſo much as a reaſonable argument to oppoſe to him, they have made a voluntary ſale of themſelves for one or more beloved ſin; and now as his *vaſſals* he may impoſe on them what others he pleaſes: and by their doting affection to their *Rachel*, take advantage alſo to obtrude the deſpis'd *Leah* upon them. And how wretched, how deplorable is this ſtate? What a *Piety* is this that we muſt owe to the *Devil*, while we can be no better than he will let us?

YET this without *Hyperbole*, the condition

of every Man that is not ſincerely uniformly Chriſtian; every indulg'd ſin gives *Satan* livery and ſeiſin of his heart, and a power to diſpoſe of it as he pleaſes. I know Men are apt to flatter themſelves with other hopes, and think that thoſe obediences they pay to God, ſhall like a pre-ingagement diſannul all after-contracts made by guilt, and put them into the poſſeſſion of Him who is able to *bind* that *ſtrong man*. But God will not be acceſſary to ſuch a fraud, even towards the Devil; while they keep the price, enjoy that pleaſure or profit wherewith he bought them, God will never interpoſe to defeat him of his purchace.

AND as God will not thus forcibly wreſt them out of his hands, much leſs will he deſcend to a capitulation and compoſition with him. *God is a jealous God*, and what *jealous husband* did ever by compact divide his right with the *Adulterer*? Where he finds a perſevering diſloyalty he gives a Bill of Divorce and diſclaims his relation. Yet ſo beſotted are Men, as to hope God will ratifie that alienation they have made of one part of their heart, and contentedly enjoy the reſt; and as competitors uſe ſometimes to do, ſhare with his Rival. But alas! that immortal quarrel will not be thus taken up, the difference between theſe irreconcileable *Antagoniſts* will not be ſo compromiſed. God diſdains ſuch a treaty, nor will ever come ſo much as to an interview with his enemy, within the liſts and receſſes of one Heart. And while Men labour ſuch an accord, they are but

combining

combining with *Satan* againſt *God* and their own *Souls*: he knows well, that while he holds any part, God will have none, and ſo the whole falls to him, and then he may very ſafely be modeſt, and demand but moderately, and by that ſeeming deference and yielding, gain more than by all his moſt eager contendings. I ſuppoſe every Man will diſown the having this ridiculous deſign of compounding the ſtrife between *Heaven* and *Hell*; but certainly it is the natural interpretation of ſuch partial obediences; when two *Litigants* contend for ſomething which I have in my keeping, if I divide it between them, is it not obvious to conclude, I deſire to compoſe the diſpute and ſatisfie both parties, and is not this the very caſe here? 'Tis true indeed, it carries a very abſurd ſound, but then how more abſurd is it for Men to act at ſuch a rate, that when 'tis repreſented to them in the trueſt colours, themſelves are aſhamed to own what they have done? And this calls loudly upon them to put themſelves out of the laſh of their own diſcipline; to recover ſuch an innocence that they may not be forc'd with *David* to ſentence themſelves, when that their crimes appear in the light diſguiſe of a *Parable*.

AND this indeed is the only proper uſe of all theſe conſiderations, the danger and folly are as *unuſeful* as *unpleaſant* ſpeculations, unleſs it be in order to the reforming that wherein both are founded. Let Men conſider themſelves, as engaged in thoſe wild projects which even themſelves look on with ſcorn: as enſnar'd in that unhappy

contract which has rendred them part of the *Devil*'s poſſeſſion, and contrive how they may obliterate that reproach, and diſintangle their Mortgag'd Souls.

AND for this there is but one way imaginable, and that is by quitting their hearts of that which they took as the valuable conſideration in that mad bargain; reſtoring *Satan*'s coyn to him, not only *principal* but *uſe* alſo: caſting away the main ſin and all the little appendages, which like off-ſets have ſhot out from that root; retaining nothing that has his mark and impreſs upon it, that ſo he may not pretend to any thing of theirs by right of barter or exchange. This, and this only is the way to diſſeiſe him of his Eſtate, to cancel thoſe fatal Indentures which bound them to him, and till this be done, as long as they keep any part of his *wages of Iniquity*, his title remains in full force, they are ſtill his *ſervants*, his *vaſſals*.

EVEN the *redemption of Chriſt* has no efficacy towards the enfranchiſing of ſuch; for though it proclaim an univerſal *Jubilee*, yet it forces liberty upon none; he that will nail his Ear to the door-poſt and defie a manumiſſion, may continue his ſlaviſh life ſtill, and indeed though Chriſt's death was deſign'd to reſcue us from the power of Satan; yet the firſt eſſay of that reſcue was to redeem us from our vain converſation: and where that is not done, which is ſo eſſentially fundamental to all the reſt, 'tis not poſſible any other part of that Redemption ſhould be atchiev'd

chiev'd, unleſs we will confound the order of *Nature* as well as *Grace*, and make the *conſequent* precede the *antecedent*.

LET no Man therefore upon any vain hopes delay the one only expedient to his ſecurity, but pay back the *earneſt peny* he has received from *Satan*, fling away his *ſin*, how pleaſant or profitable ſoever, with the greateſt Abhorrence, as knowing 'tis the *price of blood*, and that not only his *Saviour*'s, but his *own* too; and this immediately, leſt the forfeiture be irreverſible. We know the danger of lapſing time in caſe of Mortgage, but here our danger is greater, becauſe the time is ſo uncertain; for though God had nothing elſe to do in the whole tranſaction ('twas wholly our own work) yet 'tis he that aſſigns the time of forfeiture: he alone knows how far we may go in ſin, before we paſs the poſſibility of a retreat; how long he will be provok'd before he ſuffer his whole diſpleaſure to ariſe; and how many repellings of his Grace, and quenchings of his Spirit they are, to which his deſertions are apportion'd. *Pharaoh*'s heart was hardned by God after the *Eighth Reſiſtance*, and we have no ſecurity but ours may be *ſooner*, yet if that ſhould be taken as the ſtanding meaſure, how dreadful an abode would it make to many of us? Who is there that has eſpouſed any one *beloved ſin*, that has not much oftner repeated the *acts* of it, every one of which is a reſiſtance and a contumacy againſt God? Who is there that has not done it againſt ſo many expreſs warnings and loud calls of God in h'

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*Conſcience?* Which renders it yet a fuller *parallel*, and 'tis to be fear'd, too many agree with it even in the laſt and higheſt circumſtance, that of the *Plagues* too by an obſtinate perſiſting after ſo many *Judgments* ſent to mollifie and reclaim them; and then where the *premiſes* are the ſame, 'tis too likely the *concluſion* may be ſo alſo.

I SHALL not wiſh any Perſon ſo ſtrictly to apply this caſe, as to conclude, that he is already in this ſtate, but I could wiſh all Men would apply it ſo far, as to infer how *poſſible*, nay how *probable* it is, that the very next reſiſtance ſhall put them in it. 'Tis not *Pharaoh*'s being a *Heathen* and they *Chriſtians* that will give them any ſecurity; it being no part of the Goſpel Covenant, that Men ſhall be ever the longer allowed to trample upon Grace. All the difference it makes is rather on the other ſide; the contempts are enhans'd to a higher guilt, and conſequently, the fewer acts may now ſerve to fill up the meaſure. And if their experience teſtifie to them, that in their particular God has us'd a greater long-ſuffering, than he has given any grounds to expect, if the guilt of their Conſciences teſtifie that they have committed many more acts; and yet ſome remaining tenderneſſes and regrets witneſs alſo, that they are not yet given up to an utter hardneſs and obduration. O let them not preſume themſelves ſafe, becauſe they are not utterly deſperate; but lay their hearts open to be ſtampt and impreſt by grace, before they grow utterly inflexible; timely conſider what is the

deſign

deſign of this *longanimity*, and without any more ſtruglings and reſiſtance ſuffer it to attain its aim, and *lead them to repentance.*

FOR though their Souls be not yet wholly petrefied, yet how know they in what an inſtant that unhappy *Metamorphoſis* may be wrought; or if it ſhould not be ſo ſudden, yet 'tis certain every act of ſin makes gradual approaches towards it: ſo that if God ſhould not inflict it by way of *puniſhment*, yet the mere force of Habit would produce it by way of *natural efficacy*: And to be convinc'd of this, I would require no more, but that Men would reflect, and ſee what effects it has already wrought, how far it has advanc'd towards that fatal point. Let them ſend their thoughts back through every ſtage and period of their ſin, and obſerve whether as that has grown, ſo their tenderneſs and reluctance of Conſcience has not abated and decreas'd: Let them but recollect what regrets and diſquiets they had, when they ventur'd upon the firſt unlawful Commiſſion, and compare it with their preſent, and I doubt not they will diſcern a great inequality; they will find that every act of ſin hath allayed ſomewhat of the ſharpneſs of thoſe pangs, and proportionably to the frequency of the repetition they approach toward inſenſible: and then let him whoſe older Habit has multiplied thoſe *Acts*, ſadly conſider how few *ſteps* he has to the end of his unhappy journey, though no extrinſick concurrent ſhould haſten his pace. But when God's deſertion ſhall, as for ought he knows it may the

next minute ſupervene: that as a full and violent *Wind* drives him in an inſtant, not to the *Harbour*, but on the *Rock* where he will be irrecoverably ſplit.

NOR let any Man fortifie himſelf againſt theſe terrors, by hoping that his own *ſingle* (perhaps ſmall) ſin ſhall not have this deſtructive force; for if it be *wilful* it carries in it that which is properly the *malignity* of all ſin, to wit, a reſiſtance and oppoſition againſt God, and this is ſo *mortal* a Venome, that the leaſt Doſe of it is *deadly*, as a Man may as certainly be poiſon'd by a *dram of Arſenick*, as with the *largeſt draught*.

THE more natural inference lies the other way, if it be but a ſingle or petty ſin, 'tis ſo much the eaſier to part with; he that is bound with a *ſtrong Cable*, or with a multitude of leſſer Cords, may pretend ſome *neceſſity* of his Captivity, from the ſtrength of his bonds; but he that is tied with *one ſlender ſtring*, ſuch as one reſolute ſtruggle would be ſure to break, he is *priſoner* only to his own *ſloth* or humor, and who will pity his *thraldom*, where 'tis ſo apparently his *choice*? Do not therefore ſay my ſin is inconſiderable, and therefore I need not *relinquiſh* it; but my ſin is inconſiderable therefore I need not *keep* it. So ſlight a pleaſure I may part with and find no miſs: this pedling profit I may reſign and 'twill be no breach in my Eſtate. And if *Chriſt* require a renunciation of *thoſe ſins* which are as the *Hand* and *Eye*, ſhall I ſcruple to depoſite *thoſe* which are but as the *Hair or Nails*?

NAY

NAY, he may yet argue higher, and from the ſmalneſs of the ſin deduce the enhanſement of the Guilt: great acquiſitions carry ſome temptation in their face, but deſpicable prizes do rather avert than tempt. 'Twas the ſign of a *common harlot* to be *hired with a kid, Gen.* 38. and ſure he muſt be of a ſtrange proſtitute Soul, that can adulterate for ſuch low trivial wages. To diſhonour God, though the *whole world* were to be acquir'd by it, were *great impiety*; but to do it for *handfuls of Barley* and *pieces of Bread, Ezek.* 13. 19. himſelf brands as a yet higher pitch. And ſure it argues a very light eſteem of God, when one poor contemptible luſt ſhall be able to overpoize him in our hearts.

NOR is the *folly* leſs than the *prophaneneſs*, when there is but one *Jonah* to be caſt over-board, 'tis the greater madneſs to hazard a *wreck*; and let ſuch a Man pretend what he pleaſes in extenuation of his ſin, make that appear never ſo minute and deſpicable, yet 'tis apparent all the love which other Men ſcatter and diſtribute upon ſeveral, he has united and concentred in this one luſt. The moſt *doting* affection when it is ſummed up, can amount to no more than *this*, that it makes a Man expoſe himſelf to the greateſt *pain*, the greateſt *loſs* for the thing beloved. And this is moſt viſible here, *Hell* is as certainly acquir'd, and *Heaven* as certainly forfeited by *one* ſin as *many*; and then though there may be odds in other reſpects, yet what is there in this, between this more *modeſt* and the moſt *licentious* Sinner, but

that

that the *former* puts the ſame value upon one, that the *other* does upon many ſins, and ſells his Soul ſo much the cheaper.

AND now would God ſuch Men would review their *bargain*, ſoberly conſider what there is in this *Idoliz'd ſin* of theirs, which ſhould exact ſuch *coſtly ſacrifices*. Let him whoſe long intimacy and experience has given him acceſs to its moſt ſecret receſſes, that has rifled its bowels, and knows the utmoſt whether of pleaſure or profit that lies there conceal'd: Let him I ſay, that is thus qualified for it, make an exact Inventory of its Wealth, and then let him compare it with what he is to pay for it; weigh its flat and *momentary Pleaſures*, with thoſe moſt tranſcending, and *perpetual joys* which are *at God's right hand*; its baſe and periſhing commodities, with thoſe unfailing treaſures in Heaven; and then judge of his purchaſe in reſpect of that part of his price: And if that be not convincement enough, let him weigh the other alſo: thoſe ſad *pains* which are too *intolerable* to be ſuffer'd, and yet ſo *eternal*, that they can never ceaſe to be ſuffer'd, and think whether that be not too dear a rate for that pleaſure, whoſe guſt is ſo little, and whoſe duration is leſs: or what *profit* he will have in the revenue of his ſin, that *Gold* and *Silver* which will finally *eat his fleſh as it were fire, Ja.* 5. 3. and prove the unhappy *fuel of his flames*.

FROM all theſe *premiſſes*, certainly Reaſon and Religion do equally infer the ſame *concluſion*, to wit, that Men ſhould not tolerate themſelves

one minute in any known ſin of how ſmall a ſize ſoever it be: nor ſo impertinently betray their Souls to ruine for that which they call light and trivial; and is ſo indeed in reſpect of the *acquest*, but overwhelmingly ponderous in regard of the *effects* and pernicious conſequents. And O that Mens practices might evince them to have made this juſt deduction, that thoſe who have in many things preſerv'd an *innocence*, would not be ſo ill husbands as to forfeit all the *advantage* of that Care for want of extending it a little farther, nor ſuffer the whiter parts of their Soul to be diſcolour'd or tincted by the reflection of one crimſon ſin; but rather let their tears waſh that into a whiteneſs, that they may be uniform and of a piece. For though *Jacob* clad his darling *Joſeph* in a party-colour'd garment; yet God owns none either for favourite-*Son*, or ſo much as *Servant*, that he finds ſo arrayed. The *followers of the Lamb* are all clad in *white*, and in that attire we muſt be ſure to put our ſelves, if we mean to go in with him to the *marriage*. And ſince the Goſpel is the invitation to that feaſt, let none imagine he has complied with it till he have thus fitted himſelf: till then he affronts and *baffles* his Chriſtianity, ſends it away empty without its errand; nay, which is worſe, *proſtitutes* and profanes it, makes it ſerve only for a *Gourd*, that he may ſit under the ſhadow of it, and commit his ſins the more undiſturbed; but let him remember that he is all this while breeding that *worm*, which will ſmite this *Gourd*, and leave him unſhelter'd to that ſcorching

ing *wrath* of God, which will make the improvement of *Jonah*'s paſſionate wiſh, that God would take away his Life, his moſt rational Deſire; render not Death only, but Annihilation alſo as *eligible*, as it will be *impoſſible*.

## CHAP. VII.

### *A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Miſtakes concerning Repentance.*

ANOTHER dangerous Underminer of Chriſtian Practice is the many affected miſtakes in the buſineſs of *Repentance*. Men look upon that as the grand *recipe* of the Goſpel, and infallible *Catholicon* againſt all their ſpiritual *maladies*; and ſo far they judge right, for ſo indeed it is. But when they proceed to compound this Sovereign *Medicine* for their own uſe, they do it moſt deceitfully; leave out the principal and moſt operative *ingredients*: and by being ſuch ill *Apothecaries*, defame the Goſpel as the *Diſpenſatory*, and *Chriſt* as the *Phyſician*, and likewiſe ruine themſelves as the *Patients*. But of thoſe who make this imperfect and defective *compoſition*, all do it not alike; ſome leave out one part, ſome another, and ſome ſo many, that they retain nothing of its ſubſtance and reality: Eat out all the *heart* and vertue of it, and leave only an empty *ſhell*, the gilding, as it were, of the

*Pill*,

*Pill*, the Form and mere out-ſide of *Repentance.*

IN this latter rank I place thoſe who ſuffer *Repentance* to paſs no farther than their Frontiers, and Out-works, aſſign it its quarters in the *ſuperficies* of the Man, the *Face*, or *Tongue*, or *Geſture*; but if it attempt to penetrate any deeper, if it ſend but one ſerious thought to alarm the heart, then like the *Edomites* againſt *Iſrael*, *Numb.* 20. all the forces are muſtered to impede its paſſage; ſuch formal Penitents as theſe all ages have produc'd. Chriſt tells us of thoſe who *disfigur'd their faces*, *Matth. 6. 16.* put on, as it were, a vizard only to act this part: and *Eſay* 58. 5. long before deſcribes them, by the *bowing down the head like a Bul-ruſh*, and certainly the race of them is not worn out in our days; a demure or rather a lugubrious *look*, a ſad or whining *tone*, makes up, 'tis to be fear'd, the *ſumm* of many mens Humiliations. Nay as the World has of late gone, that alone were but a modeſt pretence: ſuch theatrical *forms* ſtickle hard for the *prize*, not of that one part, but of all religion: a *diſtorted countenance* is made the Mark of an *upright heart*, and none is thought to ſpeak the Language of *Canaan*, that dreſſes it not in an uncouth ſound: and then what wonder is it, that they are impatient others ſhould *worſhip God*, as *David* invites, *in the beauty*, while themſelves chuſe to do it, in the Deformity *of holineſs.*

BUT

BUT others make ſomewhat a fairer advance towards *repentance*, by taking in ſome of thoſe things which are indeed its *neceſſary concomitants*; of this kind is in the firſt place *confeſſion of ſin*; and this after ſome ſort is ſtuck at by few; no Man who hath not herded himſelf with the worſt ſort of *Fanaticks*, imagines himſelf ſinleſs, or pretends to be thought ſo by others, but will very readily acknowledge to all the World that he is a *ſinner*: and as to *Men*, ſo eſpecially, and more ſolemnly to *God*. Every Man that but offers at praying at all, thinks Confeſſion a neceſſary Branch of his Devotion: all publick *forms* have ever carried that in the *front*, as ſuppoſing it the moſt principal, univerſal, and daily requiſite to the lapſing ſtate of humane corruption: And perhaps 'tis the general innate perſwaſion of this, that hath ſecured that part of our *Liturgy*, from thoſe impertinent cavils, which have particularly aim'd at moſt other members of it. And I ſuppoſe this is as frequent in the *Cloſet* as in the *Church*: the only fear is, that there it is as looſe and general too: that thoſe private and particular guilts which are neither fit nor poſſible to be diſtinctly inſerted in *publick*, do many times loſe their place even in *private* Confeſſions alſo. The ſhortneſs and the eaſe of general forms being very likely to recommend them to thoſe whoſe numerous ſins threaten too great a length, and whoſe confus'd ſnarl'd Conſciences render it difficult thus to pull out thred by thred: but where *Sins* are thus moulded up in a

*lump*,

*lump*, they will like great *maſſes of Pills* or Confections keep the more undecay'd, retain more of their *ſtrength* and *vigour*. So that *ſuch* Confeſſions are very indulgent to *Satans intereſt*, who fears not the impreſſions that can be made upon him, while his *body* remains entire: the great execution then beginning when 'tis broken and ſcatter'd, and each ſin is ſingled out for a particular purſuit: and where that is not attempted, the war can never be ſucceſsful, nor thought in earneſt.

BUT ſuppoſe this be done; and by exact enumeration each ſin is parted from its fellows, as when a *conqueror* purſues the *flying troops* of routed Enemies: yet if this be all, if *quarter* be allowed, and any mercy given, no *real prize* is gain'd by this atchievement. He who recounts his ſins with milder purpoſe towards them than utter exciſion, he makes no approach towards the eſſential part of Repentance. He may bring out large *Catalogues* of his ſins, and call them *confeſſions*; but he may better expreſs his own ſence, if he term them rather *inventories* of his goods, for ſuch 'tis apparent he reckons them, whilſt he reſolves to keep them. Indeed there is not a more abſurd piece of *Pageantry*, than theſe *formal* Confeſſions, and ſuch as ſhews how little *God* is conſider'd in his great Attribute, *the ſearcher of hearts*. 'Tis certain no Man would hope to atone an offended ſuperior, by a ſubmiſs acknowledgment of his fault, did he know that his purpoſe of reiterating it were

diſcern'd

diſcern'd: and what a tacite *blaſphemy* is it then, to treat *God* at ſuch a rate, as preſumes him as *deceivable* as a poor *Mortal*; and ſure this were a ſtrange Ingredient in *repentance*. We look on it as a high pitch of impiety boaſtingly to avow our ſins, and it deſerves to be conſider'd whether this kind of confeſſing them have not ſome affinity with it. Should I tell a Man I have injur'd and provok'd you thus and thus, and ſo I reſolve to do again at the next opportunity: I refer it to common conſtruction whether this were not to *juſtifie*, not retract the unkindneſs. Now what I ſuppoſe thus ſaid to Man, is in the ſecret purpoſe of our heart, no leſs articulately ſpoken to God, who needs not our words to diſcern our meaning. Therefore whoever intends to *repeat* his ſins, nay does not ſeriouſly intend to *forſake* them, doth in truth maintain and defend his vicious practice, how loudly ſoever his Tongue accuſes it. And ſuch *clamors* are but like the feign'd Quarrels of combin'd *cheats*, in order to delude ſome third perſon. But alas, the ſcene is here unluckily laid, for God will not be mock'd, nor will the *Mercy* promis'd to him that confeſſeth and *forſaketh*, ever reach him that confeſſeth and *retaineth*. Confeſſion is no farther acceptable than as it either flows from, or tends to beget an abhorrence of Sin, and abſtracted from thoſe qualifications it becomes loathſome and diſtaſtful to God. Alas, can we think our *Hiſtorical* vein ſo pleaſant; that he ſhall be delighted with the *narrative* of thoſe crimes, whoſe

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perpetration he deteſted? Can it be *Incenſe* in his noſtrils, to have our *Dunghils* diſplay'd? Or can his pure eyes be gratified with ſuch polluted proſpects? True indeed, he gladly deſcends to all this as a *Phyſician*; nauſeates not our *fouleſt ulcers*, when we bring them for *cure*: but when like *beggars* we make them openly our form of addreſs, and dread nothing more than their *healing*; certainly their View will only excite his *indignation*, not his pity. And this, 'tis to be fear'd, abodes ſadly to many of us; 'tis our vulgar Objection to the *Romaniſts*, that they make their Confeſſions contributive rather to their *confidence* than to their *reformation*: what their ſhare is in that guilt, I ſhall not here examine, but I may too truly pronounce they have not enclos'd it; that black circle of Sin and *confeſs*, Confeſs and *ſin*, encompaſſes as well *Proteſtants* as *Papiſts*; if poſſibly not quite ſo many, the cauſe 'tis doubtful is (what we need not boaſt) not that more of us confeſs *aright*, but that fewer confeſs *at all*. But of thoſe that do, if we may but croſs examine, and interrogate their *actions* againſt their *words*, theſe will ſoon confeſs (and that not *auricularly*, but in a loud and audible voice) the *invalidity* of their ſolemneſt Confeſſions. When we ſee a Man that *yeſterday* kept a Humiliation, *to day* trampling on the necks, invading the poſſeſſions of his Brethren, we need no other proof how vainly and unprofitably, if not how hypocritically and provokingly he confeſſed his Pride, or Covetouſneſs: and the like

we may infer when we ſee any Man perſevere in any groſs wilful ſin. And of ſuch, God knows, there are ſuch multitudes, as will give us inſtances more than enough, how wide a difference there is between a *mere Confitent* and a *true Penitent*.

BUT in the next place, a *paſſionate regret* at Sin, a *grief* and *ſadneſs* at its Memory, more ſpeciouſly pretends to enter us into God's roll of *Mourners*: Sorrow has (in vulgar acceptation) ſo engroſt the whole notion of Repentance, that Men are apt to ſecure themſelves, that the Wind of a Penitential *Sigh* is ſo mighty, as will blow away the guilt of the moſt mountanous *Sin*: that if they have but *wept* a little upon their crimes, they have quite *extinguiſh'd* the wrath they kindled: but alas theſe are vain dreams, *God* who *delights not to grieve the children of men*, does not project for our ſorrow, but our innocence; and would never have invited us to the one, but as an expedient to the other. 'Tis natural even to mere *Animals* to ſhun that by which they have ſmarted, and therefore ſorrow for ſin is a very proper means to avert our appetite from it: but if we have learnt the unhappy skill of ſeparating the *effect* from the *cauſe*; if our Grief abate not our Love; if we can caſt kind looks at our ſins, even through thoſe Tears wherewith our Eyes are glaz'd, this will ſure be as far from accompliſhing our deſign as God's: leave us equally unpardon'd, as unreform'd.

NAY alas, ſuch Sorrows as theſe will rather ſerve to *enhanſe* than *expiate* our guilts; they

they are loud witneſſes againſt us, that we know the malignity of thoſe ſins we commit; that we have poiz'd them, and find them as a *talent of lead* upon our Souls, and yet prefer them before Chriſt's *light burthen*: that we have out-vied that perverſe Election wherewith *Elihu* charges *Job*, and choſen *affliction* rather than *innocence*, *Job* 36. 21. and though we have felt the *gnawing of the Worm*, yet ſtill reſolve to cheriſh it, till it gains its woful Concomitant of *unquenchable fire*; and ſure this reſolvedneſs, this high *fortitude* in Sin, can with no reaſon be imagin'd a preparative to its remiſſion, 'twill rather ſerve to liſt us among Satan's *Martyrs*, than God's *Penitents*.

AND indeed if we examine the original of this kind of *Sorrow*, what is there that can with any face pretend to an acceptation? Alas! 'tis apparent there is no diſlike to the ſin; for the natural effect of that, would be the abandoning it. If I have fall'n into the mire, common reaſon directs me, not to ſit down and cry that I am ſo defiled; but to cleanſe and waſh my ſelf, and beware of ſuch another miſadventure. Now God's enmity is purely with the ſin: and if we think to contract a league with him; we muſt eſpouſe his quarrel, hate what he hates: But in this caſe 'tis quite otherwiſe, we diſlike only the *conſequence*, not the *crime*; are diſſatisfied to ſee that what is ſo pleaſant, will not be ſafe: deteſt thoſe temporal or eternal miſeries, which God has annext to it: which is upon the matter to grieve not becauſe

we are *guilty*. but God is *juſt*: and to avert only that part of the *evil*, of which he owns to be the author, that of *Puniſhment*; whilſt that of *Sin*, as our own creature, we dandle and careſs. And can we think it ſufficient to atone an incenſed Majeſty, that we love our own eaſe, while yet we love our ſin ſo much better? Is it a *vertue* to have ſome ineffective regrets to damnation, and ſuch a Vertue too, as ſhall ſerve to ballance all our vices? This were indeed a compendious courſe to block up Hell gates, and leave none a poſſibility of ever getting thither, but thoſe who ſcaled the wall and deſperately reſolved to poſſeſs themſelves of that place of *Torment*. But alas, they are other *fruits* of Repentance that muſt *deliver us from the wrath to come*: for though I deny not, that the *apprehenſion* of Danger is extremely both reaſonable and uſeful, yet 'tis only by way of *preparative*: 'tis like the *Trumpet* that gives the *Alarm*, and ſets us to the *battel*, but it muſt not pretend to be like thoſe of *Gideon* that atchiev'd the whole victory. To ſee our *danger*, may occaſion, but does not cauſe, or neceſſarily infer an *eſcape*. I may madly leap into that pit which I ſee gaping to ſwallow me, and then my *foreſight* ſerves only to render me my own *murderer*. In ſhort, if that formidable aſpect of our Sins, make us run from them, it has done us the happieſt office; *pluckt us*, as S. *Jude* ſays, *out of the fire*: but if our love be ſo doting as to counter-charm our fear, if we be ſo bewitcht with the *deceitfulneſs of ſin*, that we will

will have its Embraces, though we know them *deadly*; if we weep that we have ſinned and yet go on to ſin; our wilful *Guilt* will defile our *Tears*, but our tears will never cleanſe our guilt. We only aſſiſt in the judicature againſt our ſelves; and to God's condemnation add our own: and what we call our Penitence, becomes a ſad Atteſtation of our Incorrigibleneſs.

AND as this *mere Sorrow* will never avail, ſo neither will a *partial* and *imperfect reformation*, and that whether it be defective in reſpect of the *kind*, or of the *duration*: to the former we have ſpoken elſewhere, and ſhall not need to repeat: but of the latter there will need no leſs caution; Men being apt to obtrude fallacies on themſelves in this as much as in the other. Every tranſient *gleam* of Piety is concluded to be that *flame* in which the Holy Ghoſt deſcended, and though it want the main circumſtance of reſting on them, yet ſerves to perſonate the Comforter. He that whilſt the ſoreneſs of his late pangs of *conſcience* remains, finds himſelf a little indiſpos'd for a new career in ſin, preſently concludes *repentance* hath had its perfect work in him, made that *change* and tranſmutation, which certainly denominates him a *new creature*, and pronounces his *vicious appetites extinct* and *mortified*: when alas they are but ſtrew'd over with a little *penitential Aſhes*, and will as ſoon as they meet with *combuſtible matter*, any apt temptation, *flame out* as fierce as ever; And God knows the event does too often actually atteſt this, after all

the ablutions, and purification of their repentance, their next work is to diveſt themſelves of their white robe, and thoſe whom yeſterday you ſaw in the *laver*, to day you ſhall find wallowing in the *mire*: and as with far the more *guilt*, ſo ſometimes with much the greater *confidence*, for having been ſo waſht; yet ſo ſtrongly are ſome mens fanſies poſſeſt with their imaginary purity, that they are the laſt that take notice how the ſcene is chang'd: they comfort themſelves, that ſin and they have had ſome little *skirmiſhes*, though but preparatory to a cloſer *league*; that they had fix'd good purpoſes, though there remain nothing viſible but their violation; and ſo will call themſelves Chriſt's *Sheep*, though their notorious impurities witneſs them to belong only to that *herd* into which the *Legion* entred.

THIS is a deceit which one would think ſhould immediately detect it ſelf, but 'tis ſtrange to ſee, how our *wiſhes* can preſcribe to our *faith*; and what a more than omnipotent power our ſelf-love has in reconciling contradictions: yet I can ſcarce think this innate ſtrength of corruption had been ſufficient for the purpoſe, had it not had the auxiliary aid of ſome commodious doctrines. My preſent deſign is ſo far from controverſial, that I am loth to point out any to which I muſt expreſs unkindneſs: yet upon this occaſion, I ſhall refer it to conſideration, whether that method which has been us'd to quiet *ſome* Conſciences, be not very apt to ſtupifie *more*. When I

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ſee one who from his preſent reigning ſins, regularly infers the illneſs of his ſtate; that is yet by his Caſuiſt diverted from that proſpect, and bid look back to ſee, whether no part of his Life afforded any Evidence of true Grace; and if he can but remember any ſuch time, is warranted to make that his *Epocha*, from whence to date his *infallible aſſurance*; is told that that *immortal ſeed*, though it may be covered, yet cannot be choaked; but will moſt certainly ſpring up unto *Eternal Life:* When, I ſay, I ſee this eaſie remedy preſcrib'd to his fears, 'twill be obvious for me to compound my ſelf an *Antidote* from the ſame *Ingredients*; to fix my Eye upon ſome *mark* of Regeneration which at ſome time or other, I either have, or fanſied to have had upon me, and with the ſtedfaſt beholding of that, as of the *brazen Serpent*, be fortified againſt all the *venome of my fiery luſts:* Caſt in this one ſtick, and with it ſweeten all the waters of *Marah*, ſecure me againſt all the bitter effects of my preſent guilts. How fatal an influence ſuch diſcourſings as theſe are apt to have on practice, is too obvious both in the cauſe and effect: I need not examine the authority of that grand Principle on which they are founded; ſince if that were admitted, yet it will not juſtifie the before mentioned Superſtructure: For ſuppoſe it receiv'd as an infallible truth, that grace if true can never be loſt: yet 'tis by the confeſſion of all, ſo eaſie to be deceiv'd in judging what is ſo, and our partialities to our ſelves are ſo likely to betray us to that deceit; that theſe *Corollaries*

men deduce thence for their perſonal aſſurance, can never partake of the ſuppos'd infallibility of thoſe premiſes they derive from, and conſequently are much too ſlight a *baſis* for men to truſt with ſo great a *weight*, as is that of their *preſent comfort* and *future ſtate*.

SEVERAL other pernicious errors there are in the matter of *Repentance* which men fall into, ſhall I ſay, or rather aſpire to; make it their ambition to be under their covert and patronage, and with extreme Violence to their *reaſon* as well as *religion*, climb up to thoſe Caſtles in the Air, and there fortifie themſelves impregnably againſt all the ſacred Artillery of Divine threats. Their *falſe confidences* ſerve them as *feather beds*, not only to ſleep ſecurely in, but to *dead all bullets* that are ſhot againſt them. But of all thoſe deceitful *refuges*, there is none more treacherous, and yet more confidently and univerſally reſorted to, than that of a *Repentance in reverſion*, to commence no body knows when, ſome months or years hence, when this buſineſs is diſpatch'd, that luſt ſatiated; or indeed to bear the ſame date (if not a later) with their laſt Will and Teſtament. This is that unhappy retreat to which *thouſands fly* as the routed *Syrians* to *Aphek*, 1 *Kings* 20. 30. till they are entomb'd in that *wall*, whoſe ſhelter they ſolicited. How deſperate the hazard of ſuch procraſtination is, hath been ſo convincingly demonſtrated by better Pens; that *trumpet* hath been blowed ſo loud by all our ſpiritual *watchmen*, that there remains nothing ſeaſonable, but to wonder whence

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men have got that *Lethe* which ſecures them their ſleep in ſpight of that *Alarm:* and certainly 'tis matter of the greateſt aſtoniſhment to obſerve the ſtupid, yet common boldneſs of Men, who ſo fearleſly expoſe themſelves to this moſt formidable of perils; who yet in things of far leſs danger and lighter conſequence are ſo nicely timorous, that no ſecurity is thought enough, every the remoteſt danger to their outward concerns, excites their preſent vigilance to avert it: but here that order is moſt abſurdly inverted, and the *preſent imminent danger* is aſſign'd and put off to their *future care.* Let the *Phyſician* tell them he obſerves ſome Symptomes of a latent *Malady*, ſome aptitudes or firſt Cauſes of a *Diſeaſe*; what haſte is there made to meet that Enemy *in the fron iers*, before it advance too far? All Arts of prevention are us'd, and ſuch uneaſie *remedies* ſubmitted to, as perhaps out bid the *pain* of the Diſeaſe. In like manner let a *Lawyer* tell them he has ſpied ſome defect in an *entail*, which may perhaps in the next age give ſome interruption to their deſign of having their houſes endure for ever, *Pſal.* 47. how ſolicitous are they to repair their *error*, and leave nothing to the mercy of a *Law-quirk?* And in both caſes thank the vigilant care of their informer that gave them notice of their danger: But let the *Divine* tell them he ſees their Souls languiſhing under the moſt mortal diſeaſes; that they have actually forfeited their *inheritance* in the land of the living, they can hear it unconcernedly; ſay, or at leaſt think thoſe cares are to

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be remitted to *Felix* his more convenient ſeaſon, that when their *Bodies* are as infirm as their *Souls*, then care may be taken for both together. That 'tis enough for their *ſpiritual* Life to commence, when the *natural* is expiring, and then to provide for everlaſting Habitations, when they are putting off their *Earthly* Tabernacle: as for the thanks they give their *Monitor*, 'tis generally the ſame that S. *Paul* received from the *Galatians*, to count him their *enemy for telling them the Truth*, *Gal.* 4. 16. but alas he has no reaſon to reſent the injury, ſince 'tis but the ſame they offer to their neareſt and moſt intimate friend, that *Angel guardian* which God and Nature has placed within their own breaſts, I mean their *Conſcience*: let that at any time whiſper the ſame admonition, and immediately they cry out as *Ahab* to *Eliah*, *Haſt thou found me, O my enemy?* All arts are us'd to convey themſelves out of its reach. Buſineſs, or Company, or Drink, or any thing is ſolicited to come in to their reſcue, that in that throng they may deceive its purſuit, or or at leaſt in that louder noiſe drown its voice; and is not this to look on it as their Enemy, while they ſhun it as a *Malefactor* does the *Officer*? yet I appeal to the breaſts of thoſe, who lean upon the broken Reed of a late *Repentance*, whether this be not the caſe with them: let them tell me whether they dare truſt themſelves alone with their *Conſcience* give it opportunity of ſpeaking freely to them, o laying before them the mad adventure they mak of their precious *Souls*; which they do not onl

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expoſe to as many hazards of a *ſwift damnation*, as there are accidents which may ſurprize their *bodies* with a *ſudden death*; but do beſides by this reſiſtance repel and quench that *Spirit*, without which they can never hope to effect that ſo neceſſary, ſo difficult a *work*; nay, I may, I fear, ask ſome of them, whether they have not ſo often ſhunned theſe parleys, that their *Conſciences* like an *abus'd friend*, has at laſt given them over, ceas'd to purſue them with more of thoſe unwelcome importunities; and by its ſilence left them ſecur'd from all noiſe which may diſturb that treacherous ſleep into which they have lulled themſelves. To thoſe who are thus given up to the *ſpirit of ſlumber*, I cannot hope to ſpeak loud enough to rouze them; but to thoſe that are but of the former rank, that have not yet ſo proſper'd in their unkind deſign againſt themſelves, as quite to have alienated their boſom friend, that are yet within the reach of thoſe *amica verbera*, the ſtripes and reproofs of their own Conſcience; to ſuch I would addreſs with this moſt affectionate *petition*, that they would not ſeek to remove themſelves from that *wholſom diſcipline*; that they would not fly that *Surgeon*, whoſe *Lancet* threatens none but the *impoſthumated parts*; but rather chuſe to be ſhewed the formidableneſs of their danger, than by a blind embracing it, to periſh in it. And if they have but any general conſid inclinations to this ſo reaſonable a requeſt, I ſhall then put on more ſolemnity, aſſume to come an *Envoy* from thoſe dreaded Conſciences of

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theirs, to *mediate* an enterview, to propoſe the fixing ſome time of parley, and beſpeak their *patience* to hear it out: And let them but grant this, let them but dare to do ſo much in order to their own ſafety, and I can ſcarce think it poſſible they ſhould after retain that daring, which only tends to their ruine. In a word, let Men ſeriouſly and attentively liſten to that *voice* within them, and they will certainly need no other *medium*, to convince them either of the error or danger of thus procraſtinating their *Repentance*, which themſelves acknowledge muſt not upon their utmoſt peril be finally omitted, and yet nothing but an immediate diſpatch can ſecure it ſhall not.

'TWILL be needleſs to deſcend to a particular view of more of theſe deceits, they will eaſily be detected by this one *general Rule*, that whatſoever falls ſhort of a preſent, univerſal, permanent Change, falls as much ſhort of *Repentance*. All the pretences that are made upon any other ſcore are but the Garments of the *elder brother*, put upon the back of the *younger*, which though they might delude a blind *Iſaac*, will never be able to deceive an all-ſeeing *God*. All that remains is to offer to the Reader's conſideration, how nearly he is concern'd to guard himſelf againſt all deluſions in this ſo important an affair. It was an ancient *Stratagem* of War to poiſon the Waters in an Enemies Camp, that ſo they may drink their own deaths: but *Satan* has here far out-vied that *Policy*. Were but our nouriſhment infected, we had ſtill a recourſe left us to Medicine; but here

here he has envenomed our very Phyſick, and what *cure* remains for thoſe whoſe very *remedies* are their *diſeaſe?* When that Bath which was deſign'd to cleanſe us, is it ſelf polluted, we may well cry out as *Dionyſius* of the corrupted River of *Alexandria*, ποῖον γένοιτο ἂν πάντα καθαιρον τῶ. ὕδατῶ. ὕδωρ ἄλλο καθάρσιον; What Flood ſhall cleanſe theſe Waters? Where can we be ſecure, when our *Repentance* (which the Apoſtle, 2 *Tim.* 2. 26. ſuppoſes the means of diſintangling us) is it ſelf become a Snare? This as it loudly proclaims our *danger*, ſo ſurely in all reaſon it ſhould awake our *care*, teach us not to ſuffer our ſelves to be abus'd with deluſive appearances and ſhadows of *Repentance*, leſt we finally find that *Ixion-like* we have embraced a Cloud. What an amazing defeat will it be to him, who preſumes his Tears have blotted out the *hand writing* againſt him, to find the full bill brought in at the great Aſſize, and thoſe he call'd his *penitential ſorrows* here, to prove but the Prologue to that *Tragedy* which ends in *weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth!* And therefore let every one timely provide againſt that fatal ſurprize, uſe this excellent receipt, not as a *Coſmetick* only to beautifie the face, give him ſome fair appearance to himſelf, but as *Medicine* to reſtore health; reduce him to ſuch an *Athletick* vigorous Habit, as may evidence it ſelf in all *vital* Actions, which will prove the beſt evidence in our laſt trial, where the inquiſition will not be ſo much upon our Mouths or Eyes, as upon our Hands: not how many *confeſſions* we have made,

made, or how many *tears* ſhed, but what *acts* of Vertue we have ſubſtituted in the room of our Vices: whether we have broken off our ſins by *righteouſneſs*, and our Iniquities by *ſhewing mercy to the Poor*; and without this 'tis infallibly certain, our Chriſtianity will be as ineffectual to our *Bliſs*, as it is to our *Piety*: if we will not permit it here to bring us to the *obedience* of Servants, it ſhall never inſtate us hereafter in the *inheritance* of Sons.

## CHAP. VIII.

*A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Miſtakes concerning Almighty God, and the methods of his Providence.*

TO theſe Miſtakes of our ſelves and intereſts, we have added others alſo concerning God, which are no leſs deſtructive to Chriſtian Practice; for as the *right knowledg of God is by our Saviour*, *Joh.* 17.3. put as the Epitome and ſumm of all that leads to *bliſs*, ſo our miſpriſions and miſapprehenſions of him are no leſs remarkable for the contrary effects; nor can we ſuppoſe it otherwiſe, when we remember that this is the grand work and *baſis* of all Religion and therefore if this *foundation* be deceitfully laid the *ſuperſtructure* muſt neceſſarily ſink and periſh and in this ſence 'tis poſſible for us at once to build on the *Rock* and the *Sand* too; we may

our faith intentionally on God, and yet by abſurd notions and unwarranted conceits of him, defeat in the particulars what we eſtabliſh'd in the groſs; repreſent him ſo utterly diſtant from what he is, that under that diſguiſe he will not much appear, either an encourager or Rewarder of our *Piety*, and then we may gueſs how 'tis likely to flouriſh, ſince the Apoſtle gives it as a *Fundamental Axiom*, Heb. 11. 6. That *he who comes to God, muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them which diligently ſeek him.*

OF Theſe Miſtakes concerning God, there are divers; many more than the deſign'd brevity of this diſcourſe will admit me to examine. I ſhall only mention *three*, thoſe are, Firſt, concerning his *Decrees*, Secondly, his *Attributes*, Thirdly, his *Providence*.

BY his *Decrees*, I mean not thoſe ſtanding *rules* which he has in his Word ſet forth as the *meaſures* by which he will diſtribute rewards and puniſhments; but thoſe ſecret *purpoſes of his Will*, which he neither commands us to ſearch after, nor will permit us to know. That there are many Miſtakes concerning theſe, the numberleſs Diſputes that have been rais'd about them will ſufficiently atteſt, it being impoſſible for two Contradictory Opinions to be both *true*, though in things of this abſtruſe nature 'tis very poſſible both may be *falſe*. 'Tis not my purpoſe to wade into thoſe bottomleſs controverſies which like a Gulph have ſwallowed up ſo much time and induſtry of learned men: I ſhall only in *general* commend

commend it to the Readers conſideration, whether it be probable, or indeed poſſible for thoſe Opinions to be *true* which infer *falſhood* in God? And then let the ſecond enquiry be, whether that be not too evidently the reſult of thoſe diſcourſes which ſet an Oppoſition between his *revealed* and his *ſecret* Will, his Commands and his Decrees, making the one a blind for the better execution of the other? as if all the Tranſportation and Zeal he expreſſes *for* us, all the paſſionate enamouring invitations he makes *to* us, were only to ſport himſelf with our credulity: like the divertiſement of thoſe Men, who court them for Wives, whom they would abhor to marry: nay, as if all the Proteſtations and moſt ſolemn Oaths of God, were deſign'd but to advance the deluſion, and raiſe expectations, merely to defeat them. This is ſuch a ſevere ſort of *Irony*, as we would all think not only unkind but unjuſt in a Man; and 'tis not poſſible that God, who appeals to us concerning the equality of his ways, ſhould fall ſhort of the ſtricteſt meaſures among us, or exemplifie to us an unſincerity he forbids us to follow.

HOW very inauſpicious influence ſuch *doctrines* are apt to have on *practice* is too viſible: for ſince 'tis as well the inſtinct as duty of our nature to aſpire to an aſſimilation with God, even that moſt laudable and generous ambition ſhall by this means become our ſnare; for when God ſhall be thus miſrepreſented to us, drawn out by the black Lines, not only of *ſeverity*, but *deceit*, rendred a Falſifier of his *Word*, nay *Oath*; 'twill

give not only temptation but warrant to the like Practices: we ſhall eaſily ſwallow up all the particular Commands of God, in that fundamental one of being like him; as we are taught himſelf has done both his Commands and Promiſes in his hidden Decrees. This is ſo natural a piece of *Logick*, that 'tis very unſafe Men ſhould be truſted with thoſe *premiſſes* whence 'tis deriv'd. And though we are not over apt to tranſcribe that Copy God does really ſet us, yet this ſpurious one will not miſs to be taken out: that pravity of our nature which hinders in the one, exciting and ſpurring us on in the other. This is a way to reconcile our Vices with our reputation, and ſin *cum Privilegio*; and there is little doubt of Mens aptneſs to uſe that advantage; we ſee it in lower inſtances. The *Vices* of a Prince draw ſholes of followers, when his *Virtue* leaves him the more eminent, becauſe ſing'e, and renders him rather revered than imitated: And certainly 'twas none of the Devil's ſlighteſt *ſtratagems* on the *Gentile* world, to give them *ſuch Gods* as might exemplifie to them all thoſe *odious crimes*, wherein he deſir'd to immerſe them. Whether this may not be a *branch* of the ſame Illuſion, I wiſh the Propugners of this doctrine would ſeriouſly conſider.

AND as ſeveral *ills* are hereby countenanc'd and authoriz'd, ſo is all *virtue* in general diſcouraged and diſheartned; this benums us in our Chriſtian courſe, ſubſtracts that Spirit and Vigour, which ſhould carry us through the weary ſtages of duty: indeed it cuts the very *ſinews* of

Induſtry, baffles and makes ridiculous all *purpoſes* of Labour; for what ſhould invite a Man to ſtrive for that, from which he knows he is either irreverſibly precluded, or elſe ſo infallibly aſcertain'd of, that his negligence cannot defeat him? Theſe are ſuch *extremes* as afford no *middle*, wherein the Virtue of Induſtry may exiſt, hope being equally out-dated by the deſperateneſs or unneceſſarineſs of an undertaking: and how neceſſary hope is to excite endeavour, we may learn of S. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* 15. 5. where he preſſes his *Corinthians* to the conſtancy of Chriſtian Practice upon this ground, that their *labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord.* But according to ſome Mens doctrine, 'tis ſcarce poſſible for a Man to know whether his labour be in vain or no; ſince the effect of it depends not upon the revealed *promiſe*, but ſecret *purpoſe* of God; and who knows whether there may not lie ſome *Dormant Decrees* againſt him, which when he thinks he has run his *race*, ſhall yet defeat him of his *Crown.* Whether a reward thus ſtated will much animate mens diligence, I may leave every Man to judge by the like circumſtances in their ſecular concerns; and, if they find they would there damp their courage, diſpirit and diſhearten them from attempting, there will be ſure more reaſon to conclude it in theſe *ſpiritual* affairs, wherein our induſtry is commonly much leſs indefatigable.

B U T I ſhall not farther inſiſt on the ill conſequences of particular miſtakes; there is one *fundamental error*, which if it could be cured, would

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ſuperſede all the reſt; I mean our bold folly in *medling with God's Decrees*, which we call hidden, and yet ridiculouſly confute that Epithet by pretending to know them. This is ſo much an inſolence as forfeits the compariſon, which might belong to it as an error; we ſee *ſecular States* jealouſly reſerve their *private Counſels*; and ſhall we think God ſo ſcrutable, or our ſelves ſo penetrating, that none of his ſecrets can eſcape us? Or if we think him, as indeed he is, *unfathomable*, why do we thus madly attempt what we confeſs *impoſſible*? Eſpecially ſince we ſhall not only loſe the thing we ſo vainly purſue, but others which we might elſe enjoy. 'Tis as if a Man ſhould be ſo tranſported with a buſie earneſtenſs of knowing his Prince's *Secrets*, as quite to forget his *Laws*, and incur capital puniſhment. God has given us *rules of life*, which upon the ſevereſt penalties he requires us to ſtudy and practiſe; and we divert from theſe, and make it our buſineſs to trace his *Counſels*. We are gazing at the *Stars* to read our deſtiny, and look not to our *feet*; and by that negligence experiment the worſt fate they could have portended: for I think we may ſay our wild *Phancies* about God's Decrees, have in event reprobated more than thoſe *Decrees*, upon which they are ſo willing to charge their ruine, and have bid fair to the damning of many, whom thoſe left ſalvable. And indeed 'tis to be expected from Divine Juſtice, that ſuch bold Inquiſitors ſhould find nothing but their own Deſtruction. That Ark which devoutly reverenced brought

*Bleſſings*, when curiouſly pried into diffus'd *Peſtilence* and *Death*, 1 *Sam.* 6. 19. Nay the very *Poets* will tell us, that if we will have *Prometheus* his Fire, we muſt take *Pandora*'s Box alſo: and ſure Induſtry cannot be worſe laid out than thus to fetch home *Plagues*, and while ſo much of it runs waſte to ſuch unhappy purpoſes, 'tis no wonder if we want for better; forget our *calling* by contemplating our *predeſtination*; and let the Opinion of our *fate* be at once the encouragement and excuſe of our *ſloth*, than which nothing can more evacuate the purpoſe and deſign of our Chriſtianity, which Divines have truly defin'd to be not a *contemplative* but *active* Science.

TO the ſame unhappy Effect concur our Miſtakes of *God's Attributes*, if I may call them Miſtakes, which ſeem to be rather wilful Neſcience, they being ſo delineated to us both in his Word, and his Providences, that 'tis not want of light, but winking againſt it that muſt leave us ignorant. What the *ſpeculative errors* are in this matter concerns not my preſent deſign to examine: but there ſeem to be ſome Miſperſwaſions concerning the *Divine Attributes*, which do remarkably tend in their conſequence and effect, to the corrupting *mens manners*; nay, look as if they were deſign'd, and effectually choſen for that purpoſe; I mean, eſpecially thoſe concerning his *Juſtice* and *Mercy*, which being the *Attributes* in which we have the moſt immediate concern, the Errors in them are the more noxious and deſtructive. Of this ſort is that narrow ſcanty notion

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too many have of *God's Juſtice*, which we meaſure not by *him* but *our ſelves*, and therefore proportion it not according to his *infinity*, but our own *concerns*. That is an Attribute from which we promiſe to our ſelves no advantage, and therefore we are willing to contract and ſhrink it up, make it ſerve only as a *Cypher* to advance *mercy*, but are unwilling to underſtand it in its proper Extent; think it a *word of form* put in to complete the greatneſs of God's Style, rather than any *intrinſick part of his nature*, which he muſt deny himſelf to put off.

THUS do we ſacrilegiouſly ſteal from God a part of his being, and while other Sacrileges invade only his *Patrimony*, this commits a riot upon his very *Nature*; yet as if we meant the Proverb ſhould indemnifie us, and *Exchange* extinguiſh the *Robbery*, we add to another attribute what we have defaulk'd from this, and amplifie and extend his *Mercy*, as much as we confine and limit his *Juſtice*; that is the one infinite Ocean, wherein not only we, but himſelf muſt be ſwallowed up. We will think of him under no other notion, nor allow him to be any other thing, but what ſhall be in ſubſerviency to this: we will have him powerful to *relieve* our Diſtreſſes, but not to *revenge* our Crimes; Wiſe to *defeat* the machinations of our Enemies, but not to *circumvent* our own indirect or impious Policies; All-ſeeing to *behold* our Wants and Griefs, but not to *diſcern* our cloſer Guilts; True to *perform* his Promiſes, but not his Threats. In ſhort, we

model all that is in God to our own wiſhes; and inſtead of believing him what he is, phancy him what we would have him. Like *Micha*, *Judg.* 17. 5. *making us a God* for our own peculiar uſe, and forming the Deity we mean to worſhip. A ſtrange bold Inverſion for Creatures thus to faſhion their Creator, put their own ſtamp and impreſs upon him, and ſhape him to their Phancies. And indeed 'tis nothing but *Phancy* that has to do in this attempt, and accordingly it muſt vaniſh as the *operations* of that illuſive Faculty uſe to do. We may repreſent God to our ſelves as we pleaſe, but that has no more real *influence* on him, than a *deforming Optick Glaſs* has on the *Object* it diſguiſes, he is ſtill *the ſame* amidſt all our wild conceits of him, and will always make good the *title*, by which he delivered himſelf to *Moſes*, *Exod.* 3. 14. *I am that I am.* All that is in him is equally immenſe and infinite, his *mercy* need not invade his *juſtice* to gain it ſelf a larger field of action, which is already (as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks) *over all his works*; neither his *juſtice* encroach upon his *mercy*, that having alſo a Province wide enough; all impenitent ſinners being within its Verge, and God knows how much ſoever we ſtraiten it in our *opinions*, we do indeed too much extend it in its *real force*, by rendring our ſelves the proper objects of it. In ſhort, God who is the author of *order* and peace, cannot be ſuppos'd to be in *confuſion* within himſelf; the divine Attributes are not in *ſtrife*, but perfect *harmony*; 'tis we only that have rais'd this more

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than *Gigantick war*, not only *againſt* Heaven, but *in* it. The ſeveral *Luminaries* purſue the regular motions of the *Spheres*; but we confound at once the *Laws* of their Creation, and their *Author* too, ſtrive to eclipſe and darken *the father of light*. But if the removing of an earthly Land-mark be a crime puniſhable both by God and Man, what Thunder-bolts belong to thoſe who thus attempt to ſet new boundaries in Heaven, to limit and meaſure out even the *divine Nature*, by the proportions of their own *Phancies*: and indeed ſuch temerity as this, is too like to confute it ſelf, and feel that Juſtice it will not believe; yet as great and daring a crime as it is, I fear there are few that can totally acquit themſelves of it: for though all diſavow it, yet he that ſhall narrowly ſearch his own heart, will ſcarce find it clear from all degrees of it: We are all apt to cheriſh a *flattering hope*, that God is not ſo ſevere as he is repreſented, or that if in reſpect of his Juſtice he be a *conſuming power*, yet that Mercy will be ſure to ſnatch us out of the *burning*; like the Angels to *Lot*, aſſiſt our Eſcapes, and provide us a *Zoar, that our Souls may live*: and this Hope though founded only in our *wiſhes*, is very apt to ſlide into our *faith*, and make us believe what we would have: by which means this becomes a kind of *Epidemick* Hereſie, the moſt frequent and common miſperſwaſion that occurs concerning the divine Attributes.

IT would be a work more long than uſeful to recite the ſeveral errors that have ſprung from

this one. That of *Origen*, that *the Devils ſhould finally be ſaved*, is a noted and pregnant Inſtance, which could be deriv'd from nothing but this unequal apprehenſion of God's Juſtice and Mercy: And beſides all other ancient, we have many branches of a large growth, that ſpring from the ſame root, a ſet of plauſible falſities, which would quench the *unquenchable Fire*, and kill the never *dying Worm*; I mean thoſe allaying ſoftning deſcriptions ſome of this age have made of Hell, ſome changing the *kind*, others abating the *intenſeneſs*, or at leaſt the *duration* of thoſe Torments, each ſubſtracting ſo much from this *Tophet*, that they have left *Atheiſm* an eaſie task to take away the reſt; and may give ſuſpicion they mean to viſit that place, which they are ſo induſtrious to make eaſie.

BUT whatever they do *themſelves*, 'tis ſure this is the way to ſend *others* thither, to take off their fears of it, to make them think it not ſo dreadful a place as they once ſuppos'd, and conſequently leſs careful to decline the ways that lead to it. 'Tis indeed too obvious that ſuch perſwaſions do mightily impugn Chriſtian Practice, and embolden men in ſin: And God knows we need no ſuch encouragement; the more general fallacious hopes of Mercy being too ſufficient for that purpoſe without theſe ſupernumerary deceits: but between the one and the other, *Libertiniſm* is like to out-grow all reſtraints, and the opinion of *God's goodneſs* inſtead of *leading men to repentance*, will ſlacken thoſe reins where-

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with our brutiſh Nature ſhould be bridled and reſtrain'd, and we thus left unto the ſway of luſt and paſſion, muſt run headlong upon ruine, *as the horſe ruſheth into the Battel.* For alas, we are not ſo *generous* as to do well for Virtues-ſake, nay not ſo *provident* as to do it for Reward; 'tis our fear that is the moſt prevalent incentive, and accordingly we find Religion generally makes her firſt impreſſions there. They are *the terrors of the Lord* that do moſt uſually and moſt effectually *perſwade men*, 2 *Cor.* 5. 11. our Hearts muſt be pricked, and at thoſe Orifices piety enters. Now when all theſe terrors ſhall be ſuperſeded by the opinion of an overwhelming mercy, when *Hell* ſhall either be annihilated, or ſuppos'd ſo to annihilate us, that we ſhall loſe our paſſiveneſs with our being, and be as uncapable of ſuffering, as even *Heaven* it ſelf can make us, what will be left to engage us to *virtue*, or deter us from *vice?* Alas, do we not often ſee a daring Luſt bid *battel* to all the artillery of Heaven, meet *God* in his loudeſt thunder, and venture on *damnation* in its dreadfulleſt form? And can we think it will be more modeſt, when it ſhall be told that they are only edgeleſs weapons it hath to encounter? That God's Thunder amidſt all its noiſe carries no *bolt*? And that the Flames of the bottomleſs Pit, are but a *painted fire*, that at a diſtance may fright but not hurt us, or at leaſt ſo hurt us, that we ſhall not feel it? When thoſe rubs which are interpos'd are thus removed, there is nothing to ſtay the courſe of headlong riot, but pre-

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precipitouſly it will on, whereever *ſtrong deſire* ſhall drive, or *flattering luſt* allure: he that loved his ſin, even when it threatned him *ruine*, ſerv'd it aſſiduouſly, when it promiſed no other wages than *death*, *Rom. 6. 23.* how will he hug this *viper* when he thinks 'tis ſtingleſs, and give up his ear to be bored by that *Maſter* which affords him preſent pleaſures without future ſtripes? We ſee even in Civil Matters the *preſumption* of Impunity is the great *nurſe* of Diſorders, and if it were not for the *coercive* power of Laws we ſhould ſoon ſee how little the *directive* would ſignifie; and doubtleſs 'tis the ſame in ſpiritual or rather worſe, by how much we are more bent upon the breaking of God's Laws than mens, and conſequently will be the more apprehenſive of any encouragement.

OF the truth hereof our experience gives too ſad proof, none ruſhing ſo boldly upon God's *juſtice*, as thoſe who have moſt fortified themſelves againſt the *dread* of it, as if they meant their *practice* ſhould experiment the truth of their *ſpeculation*, and make the utmoſt trial whether God can be provok'd or no. Indeed men uſe *mercy* as amaz'd Paſſengers ſometimes do a *plank* in a ſhipwrack, lay ſo much weight upon it, as ſinks both it and themſelves; ſo periſhing by too great a confidence of their reſcue, and finding a *Gulph* where they expected an *Ark*: not that I ſuppoſe Mercy unable to ſupport the weight of all the *Perſons*, nay, and of all the *ſins* in the world, which have not the one ponderous *adherent* of impenitence

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ſuperadded; but that is a burthen which even the divine *Clemency* ſinks under, refuſes to plead ſuch a cauſe, and refers it to *Juſtice* as its proper Court: And therefore to ſin on, in hope of mercy, is to undermine our ſelves, and commit a folly as abſurd as ruinous; I wiſh I could ſay 'twere not alſo as frequent; but God knows 'tis every where too apparent; Men openly avow it, ſo that 'tis become the vulgar anſwer to every convicting Reproof, that *God is merciful*: and ſurely they that obſerve the growth of Vice, ſince our new deſcriptions of Hell came abroad, will have cauſe to think the one has had no ſmall influence on the other, and that while ſome have made it borrow the uneaſineſs of our humane ſtate to make up its torments; they have taken care it ſhould be juſt, and lend us back ſins of a greater magnitude. This miſerable traffick have theſe Factors ſetled, between the preſent world and the infernal region, that Hell ſhould have Earths *pains*, and Earth Hells *wickedneſs*; the latter alas we are too fully poſſeſt of, which is like to ſend too many ſouls to diſcover the deceit of the other. In fine, our groundleſs confidences of Mercy, and thoſe other *Chimæra*'s we forge out of that, are certainly the moſt frequent and dangerous underminers of Chriſtian practice: theſe like the *Sun* give heat and vigour to thoſe inordinate luſts which a juſt *fear of vengeance* would as a winter's froſt nip, and deſtroy: And till we lay by theſe eaſie ſlight thoughts of God, and conſider him in thoſe more awful attributes which exact our reverence, his *mercy* will only

only ſerve to ripen us for his judgment; that ſmooth and gentle property in God, which to all who abuſe it not is indeed the *oil of gladneſs*, will thus perverted acquire the more fatal quality of Oil, ſerve only to intend our *flames*, and remove us as far from the *rewards* of Piety, as our bold *phancies* have done from the *practice*.

A third ſort of miſtakes there are by which Piety is obſtructed, and thoſe are ſuch as concern *God's Providence*, about which the world has long ſince had many diſputes; ſome entirely denying it, as preſuming God ſo wholly taken up with the contemplation and enjoyment of his own felicity, that he is utterly inconſiderate of that of his creatures, and an unconcern'd *ſpectator* of humane affairs; others limiting and reſtraining it to thoſe things only which themſelves were pleas'd to think worthy of the divine inſpection and conduct: But theſe queſtions have been more bandied among *Philoſophers* than *Chriſtians*, and therefore are beyond our preſent enquiry. Yet give me leave by the way to expreſs my fears, that theſe errors have yet ſome ſecret rooting in too many hearts; that there are many who rather formally *ſay*, than cordially *believe*, that God governs the World, and diſpoſes as well of *humane* as *divine* things; a ſuſpicion that is rendred too probable by thoſe indirect arts Men uſe, to poſſeſs themſelves of ſecular advantages; for did they ſeriouſly think, that all thoſe things are in God's hands, from whence they are neither ſtrong nor cunning enough, either to wreſt or pilfer them,

them, 'tis ſcarce imaginable they ſhould attempt ſuch painful impoſſibilities, diſquiet themſelves in vain, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks, and which is worſe, forfeit all title to them as God's gifts, by thus aſſuming to make them their own. But this is a diſquiſition I muſt leave every Man to make in his own heart; only let me ſay, that he that has there any doubt of God's univerſal or particular Providence, has alſo in it the root of all *unchriſtian Sins*, of Diſtruſt, Solicitude, and Fraud: there being nothing that can effectually ſuperſede our own carkings and contrivances for our ſelves, but the aſſurance that God cares for us. Men being ſtill apt to ſcramble, where there is none from whom they expect an orderly and ſufficient diſtribution, and therefore this error whereever it is found, may well be reckon'd among the impeders of Chriſtian Duty.

BUT beſides thoſe who thus doubt of Providence, there are others liable to great miſtakes, I mean thoſe who to their *juſt belief* of God's Providence, ſuperadd a *groundleſs confidence* of their own skill in fathoming it; that are not content to know it in its *product* and event, but pretend to diſcern it in its moſt ſecret *deſignments* and purpoſes; and do not ſo much *reverſe* God's diſpenſations, as *interpret* them. I do not here mean to condemn all *particular applications* of providential Events, which are ſometimes ſo extraordinary and remarkable, that they are their own *expoſitors*, and point out the *conſtruction* we are to make: and an humble advertence unto ſuch,

ſuch, is not only innocent but neceſſary: but when Men ſhall attempt to read every line in *God's hand*, to make their own inference from every efflux of Providence; theſe pretenders to *divine Palmeſtry*, ſeem to differ only thus much from thoſe who make a trade of the *natural*, that they cheat *themſelves* as well as *others*.

YET there want not ſome who have gone yet farther, and think not only to *underſtand* Providence, but *aſſiſt* it: not only trace it in all its intricate windings, and concealed *intendments*, but help it in the execution, and give birth to its *conceptions*: Of this ſort eſpecially are thoſe, who having poſſeſt their brains with ſome conjectural expoſitions of obſcure Prophecies, will adminiſter to Providence, and call out thoſe events they expect: and as if they were conſcious that God would not make good their dreams, endeavour to do it themſelves. This age has afforded too many inſtances of this, when the *fulfilling the Prophecies* has by ſome been made the ſolemn ſummons to *rebellion and blood*: and in order to the *hating and deſtroying the whore*, *Rev.* 17. 1. Men have been animated to hate and deſtroy all who were not infected with their own Phrenzy. This we know has been call'd the *helping of the Lord againſt the mighty*, and ſomething more than votive Curſes awarded to thoſe who refus'd to aſſiſt. Thus have they firſt wildly miſtaken, and then no leſs wildly out-run God's deſigns: as if like *Baal*, *Judg.* 6. he were unable to plead for himſelf, to vin-

vindicate his own cauſe, or effect his purpoſes without their help: and having reſolved what he ſhall do, obtrude themſelves upon him as his inſtruments; how repugnant ſuch *anticipations* of Providence are to the *intereſts* of Chriſtianity is too apparent from the many *deteſtable effects* they have produc'd.

BUT ſetting aſide theſe, let us return to thoſe we ſpake of before; who preſuming to expound providential Events, make them the *Criterion* by which to judge both of *perſons* and of *cauſes*, concluding the one loved or hated, the other approved or diſallowed by God, according to their *proſperous* or *adverſe* Succeſs. The firſt of theſe was by our Saviour exploded, as an undue way of proceſs in the *Jews*, in the caſe of the *Galileans*, and before him *Solomon* had given it as a Maxim, that *no man could know love or hatred by all that is before him*, *Eccl.* 9. 1. And if under the *Jewiſh Oeconomy*, where temporal Bleſſings made up ſo great a part of their Promiſes, it was ſo; much more is it under the *Goſpel*, whoſe frame and compoſure is quite diſtant; which inſtead of propoſing ſecular proſperities to its *proſelytes*, aſſures them the contrary; ſets up the Croſs as the Standard under which they are to fight, and affords no temporal Hopes, but with an allaying *proviſo* of Perſecutions and afflictions; nay, the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* goes farther, makes them not only *incident* but *neceſſary* to Chriſtians, the badge and cognizance of Sonſhip, whilſt the *no chaſtening* is the fatalleſt Sign, *a token of baſtardy* and

and abdication, *Heb.* 12. 7, 8. And doubtleſs the experience of every Chriſtian aſſerts the doctrine; we are all apt with the *Prodigal* to forſake our father's houſe, and as long we can have the riot and not the wants, ſhall never think of returning; we muſt be famiſh'd into conſideration, and our *husks* alone will ſend us home to the *fatted Calf.* And can there be a greater indulgence in God, than thus to make our Iniquity our Puniſhment, that it may not be our Ruine? To embitter thoſe ſenſualities whoſe luſciouſneſs ſerves to intoxicate us, and to clip thoſe wings which he ſees carry us from him? Stories tell us that the *Trojan* Wives after the *deſtruction* of their Country, being wearied with their reſtleſs vagrant life, neceſſitated their Husbands to a *ſettlement* by *burning* their Ships. And the ſame kind ſtratagem God has upon us: he ſees that our worldly acceſſions do rather enlarge than fill our appetites, and carry us on to farther purſuits, and by drawing us ſtill more from him the Center of reſt, expoſe us to endleſs wandrings, and then what can be kinder than to reſcue us from ſuch a condition, that Curſe of *Cain*, to be a *fugitive and a vagabond in the Earth*: to deprive us of our treacherous proſperities, and fire thoſe Ships wherein we are preparing like *Jonah*, to *flee from the preſence of the Lord*; ſo by a happy neceſſity forcing us to fix our ſelves on him. And this is the worſt, God deſigns us in every adverſity: and did we mean but as well to our ſelves, we ſhould not miſs of receiving the happieſt Effects, even

that

that *peaceable fruit of Righteouſneſs* the Apoſtle ſpeaks of, *Heb.* 12. This holy Men ſo well underſtood, that we find them dread nothing ſo much as an uninterrupted proſperity; they, like the *Muſcovite* Women, grew jealous of God's love when he forbare to ſtrike, upon which ſcore it is, that in the Ancient Fathers there are ſo many ſolemn Petitions for ſtripes; ſuch importunate ſolicitations for the *medicinal corrections*, wherein they judg'd both God's *kindneſs* and their own *ſafety* to conſiſt.

AND then how perverſe, how prepoſterous are our meaſures, when we conclude quite the other way, eſtimate *God's love*, only from *outward ſucceſſes*, and think he is never angry but when he ſmites: a Perſwaſion, which as it is very falſe in its *grounds*, ſo very pernicious in its *effects*, and creates hopes and fears as fallacious as it ſelf. For firſt, if we apply it to our ſelves, it produces miſchiefs proportionable to the divers ſtates under which we are. If a man be *full* and *proſperous*, it makes him *proud* and *ſecure*, for when he has not only the poſſeſſion of thoſe things the World values, but takes them as an atteſtation of God's peculiar kindneſs and approbation, what ſhould make him either conſider or reform his guilts? If he have ſanctity enough to poſſeſs him of God's favour, and theſe profitable effects of it, he will not be eaſily perſwaded he needs more: and any man that ſhall tell him he does, ſhall be heard with the ſame indignation wherewith *Cræſus* entertain'd *Solon*, when he found him queſtion that

happineſs, which he expected he ſhould have *admir'd.* Proſperity is in it ſelf an emboldening thing, but when back'd by this Opinion of it, grows into all inſolence, till at laſt it even recoil in the face of the Donor, and dare God by all thoſe enormous riots, to which it *enables Men.*

ON the other ſide, this opinion preſents a leſs *merry*, but not leſs *dangerous* Temptation to thoſe in adverſity; for when they ſhall look on *themſelves* only as the *Anvil* of God's ſtrokes, they will be too apt to compleat the *parallel* by anſwering it in *hardneſs* and inflexibility; have the ἀντίτυπον νῦν, as the Father calls it, which reverberates the blow on him that gave it. Reſerving wickedneſs is ſo naturally the iſſue of Deſperation, that we find the *Jews* take up the one merely to countenance the other, pretend *hopeleſsneſs* to avoid *reformation*: Thus we find it, *Ezek.* 33. 10. *Our iniquities are upon us, and we pine away in them. how ſhould we live?* And again more plainly, *Jer.* 18. 12. *There is no hope*, and then the inference is ready, *Let us walk every one in his own ways.* Endeavour is the child of hope, and we attempt not to atone one whom we conclude implacable: ſo that Wrath may conſume, but will never melt us; 'tis Love only that has that *ſoftning* diſſolving Power, and unleſs we diſcern a mixture of that in God's *inflictions*, they will never render us *malleable* to his *impreſſions.* We kiſs a Father's hand and rod, when an executioners ſtroke we ſuffer rather than bear. S. *John* tells us, *we love God becauſe he loved us,* 1 *John* 4. 19.

19. I with all Men would make good the Inference; but 'tis ſure they are apt to do it in the reverſe, and will hate if they apprehend themſelves hated; a ſtate which at once exemplifies, and anticipates the worſt part of *Hell* to us, yet very incident to thoſe who interpret every ſtroke of God's, as the effect of enmity and utter averſion. This is to do that to our ſelves which the *Devils* ſo deprecated from Chriſt, to *torment us before our time*, it being peculiar to the vengeance of the other World to be merely punitive, that here being rather *diſcipline* than *vengeance*, deſign'd to reduce, not deſtroy us: and indeed beſides the *pain of ſenſe* which this Error creates, it does (to perfect the Hell) give that *of loſs* alſo; deprives us of one of the great Evangelical *felicities*, that of *rejoycing in Tribulations*, which our Saviour thought ſo conſiderable, as to inſert amongſt his Beatitudes: And his Apoſtles frequently mention it triumphantly as the great *privilege* and *prerogative* of a Chriſtian. For if all adverſe ſucceſſes be a note of God's diſfavour, there will be no place for joy, even in the moſt pious ſufferings. S. *Stephen*'s raviſhing proſpect will be intercepted, and a *Martyr*'s death be as uncomfortable as a *Malefactor*'s. But if theſe were the only ſufferings to which joy were annext, there wou'd be but too few concern'd in the deprivation; thoſe wherein we are more univerſally intereſſed are thoſe Chaſtiſements of God which our Guilts provoke; which though in reſpect of their *cauſe*, they are Matters of the great-

eſt ſadneſs, yet in regard of their ſignificancy and *effect*, they are grounds of comfort; they ſignifie that God, (however diſpleas'd) yet has not abandoned the care of us; thinks us worth his *correction*, and deſigns our *reducement*: and the effect will (if not obſtructed by us) be anſwerable to that deſign: our *Chaſtening* here, reſcues us from the *ſins*, and conſequently the *condemnation of the world*, 1 *Cor.* 11.32. and this is ſure no ſlight motive of rejoycing; and we are very unjuſt to God and our ſelves, if we will exchange it for the ſullen murmurs of a deſperate incorrigibleneſs.

AND as this perſwaſion is thus *pernicious* in reflexion on *our ſelves*, ſo neither is it more *innocent* when applied to *others*; for firſt, if we look on the Men that proſper in the world, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks, *Pſal.* 73. 12. we ſhall too often find them anſwer the *character*, he gives them in the former part of the *Pſalm*; and when from their temporal affluence we ſhall conclude God's favour to them, 'twill be hard reſiſting the *temptation*, which (without that Argument) the *Pſalmiſt* was under, of thinking it *vain to cleanſe our hearts, or waſh our hearts in innocency*. Nay, we ſhall be apt to joyn our ſuffrage to thoſe in *Malachy* 3.15. and call the *proud*, *happy*: and if we eſteem them ſo, 'tis natural to deſire to be like them; ſo we ſhall quickly grow to diſpiſe a poor or *afflicted Innocence*, and embrace all thriving *proſperous ſins*.

ON the other ſide, if we look on others in an adverſe, calamitous ſtate, this opinion ſuggeſts hard and ſevere ſentences concerning them, inclines

clines us to judge where we ſhould ſuccour, and how great an accumulation of Miſery that is, we may learn from *God*, whom we find not ſo often nor ſo paſſionately complaining of any of his *preſſures*, as of the unkind *cenſures* of his Friends, who weighing in this deceitful balance of temporal ſucceſſes, made very falſe judgments of him, and as if they were to Glean after Satan, endeavoured to deſpoil him of that only comfort his malice had left, the conſcience of his Innocency. This is, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks, *to proſecute him whom God has ſmitten*, and *to talk to the grief of thoſe whom he hath wounded*; a thing repugnant to the common temper of humanity, and much more to that tenderneſs, thoſe affections and bowels Chriſtianity requires; and therefore in this reſpect alſo, we may reckon this perſwaſion very injurious to Chriſtian duty.

NOR is it leſs ſo when applied to *Cauſes*, in which it is full as deceitful a Rule as it is in *Perſons*: God has deſign'd us another meaſure of our undertakings; his *word* and *law*, by the general proportions whereof, we are to ſquare and accommodate our particular *actions*: he ſends us not to his *providence*, and the various diſtributions of that, or allows us to judge of the *Juſtice*, by the ſucceſs of our *Attempts*. If that were the trial, 'twere impoſſible for any enterprize to be lawful, ſince that which ſhould legitimate it, is ſubſequent to it, and can have no influence on it, to the making it good or bad: and as it does not make, ſo neither does it infallibly ſignifie it to be

either; and of thoſe who preſume it does, I ſhould ask whence it came to do ſo? If by any aſſignation of God, let them produce it; and if not thence, I'm ſure it can make no pretence to certainty, God having no where oblig'd his *Providence* to make good our *phancies* and *conjectures*. Nay, if we look into Scripture examples, we ſhall find this irrefragably confuted; the ſame Cauſe having at ſeveral times differing ſucceſs. Thus the *Iſraelites* were diſcomfited at their firſt aſſault upon *Ai*, and yet ſucceſsful after; 'twas ſomething extrinſick to the cauſe that made the variation, that ſtill continuing the ſame. The like we find in the caſe of the *Benjamites*, who though in as ill an engagement as can well be imagin'd, had yet two victories over the other Tribes, *Judg.* 20. But there is one inſtance that may ſerve for all, and that is the taking of the Ark by the *Philiſtines*: He that ſhall contemplate that, will ſure never think fit to meaſure Cauſes by ſucceſs, unleſs he will give the deference alſo to *Dagon*, who then triumph'd in the ſpoils of the God of *Iſrael*. In ſhort, 'tis evident, victories are not ſo entail'd upon the juſteſt cauſes, but that they may be, and often are cut off, either by the guilts of the undertakers, or by ſome other ſecret diſpoſal of the Divine Wiſdom; but the former is ſo frequently the obvious cauſe of it, that we are not often put to reſort to the latter. 'Tis no ſtrange thing to ſee all *Iſrael* troubled by an *Achan*, or have the *Ark* taken captive from off the ſhoulders of *Hophni* and *Phineas*, nor will it ever be

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poſſible for the beſt Cauſe to ſecure it ſelf from the blaſting influence of its Abettor's crimes.

THIS is ſo clear and evident a Truth, that 'tis matter of ſome wonder how the contrary perſwaſion ſhould ever inſinuate it ſelf; and indeed it is not probable it ever had, if Intereſt, that grand *Sophiſter*, had not introduced it. Men engage in deſigns, not on intuition of their *lawfulneſs*, but *profit*; and when they are ſuch as nothing can warrant *à priore*, their only reſerve is to make them good *à poſteriore*; to bring a licenſe after the fact, and juſtify their beginning by their end; which how ridiculous ſoever it may ſeem to ſober reaſon, yet ſuch is the natural ſhame, or ſecular inconvenience of owning an *unjuſt Act*, that men will wrap themſelves though in the thinneſt and moſt *diaphanous veils*, make uſe of the abſurdeſt *pretences* and fainteſt *colours*, to ſhadow their *Guilt*, and whilſt conſciouſneſs bids them ſay ſomewhat for themſelves, and the caſe affords no ſolid Plea, they are driven to theſe deplorable ſleights and ſubterfuges. Indeed this is an argument that ſtands ſingle, and is ſeldom uſed but in thoſe cauſes that admit of no better; which we may reaſonably conclude to be the reaſon, why it was ſo much inſiſted on by our late diſturbers, who in ſuch *abundance of light*, as they own'd, could not be ſuppos'd *ignorant* enough to believe themſelves: 'twas certainly the deſtitution of better arguments that caſt them upon this, forc'd them to ranſack the *Alcoran*, and rifle a piece of *Turkiſh Divinity* to make good their *Saintſhip*.

They now diſcern the unskilfulneſs of that *plea*, which a little time has converted to an *accuſation*. The great change it has pleas'd God to make among us, retorting their conquering *Syllogiſms*, and making them need a new ſucceſs to juſtifie their vaunts of the old. God grant we may not here relieve them again, and by our perſonal ſins, help them to that which the juſtice of their Cauſe never did, nor is like to acquire them.

BUT though this plea of Succeſs be frequently urg'd in *policy*, yet it prevails with many who know not that it is ſo; indeed the vulgar are ſo much ſubjected to their *ſenſes*, that generally the concluſions drawn thence, are eaſily embrac'd, when thoſe from Reaſon and Conſcience have a double difficulty, firſt to be underſtood, and next to be admitted, and the moſt elaborate Diſcourſe ſhall not convince them of the right of that *cauſe*, which in the laſt appeal to God's Tribunal by War, has been openly condemn'd; whilſt the *ſpoils* of victory as much ſatisfie the Underſtanding of the *juſtice* of the Prize, as the Deſire, with the *wealth* or *glory* of it. And this is it which renders ſuch kind of Arguings very pernicious, they being ſo fitted to the common temper, that they ſeldom miſs to be effectual; and engage the *heady* multitude in the proſecution of the worſt *deſigns*, that are recommended to them by the one *Catholick vertue* of Succeſs. This is indeed as the *Prophet* ſpeaks, *Ez.* 13. 22. *to ſtrengthen the Hands of evil doers, that they turn not from their wickedneſs*; to dazle their Eyes ſo with the ſplendor of

proſperous

proſperous iniquity, that they can never come to take an exact view, and diſcern it in its true form: and doubtleſs this was none of the leaſt-prevailing arts of ſeducement among us, and drew in many to abet thoſe ſeditious practices, which all Laws of God and Man prohibited, and whereby *Chriſtian Religion* has at once been violated and defam'd; has not only *her precepts* broken, but *her ſelf* aſperſt with the foul conſequences of that diſobedience, and ſo buys one injury with another; the contempt of her *Authority* with the loſs of her *Reputation.*

WE have now ſeen the *ill conſequences* iſſuing from theſe miſtakes of God's *Providence*, but we muſt take notice that there remains yet as great or greater danger on the other ſide; and that a *total neglect* is worſe than an *erroneous conſtruction* of it. For though God hath ſecluded us from that more exact minute diſcerning of his purpoſes, yet he means not his *diſpenſations* ſhould be lookt on as wholly *inſignificant*; and therefore has given us the general ſcope and meaning of them, according to which we are to limit and reſtrain our *wandring gueſſes*, and alſo judge of particular *events*. Now as God's original and primary *deſign* in the Creation of Man, was to render him a *ſubject capable of eternal happineſs*; ſo alſo have all his *ſubſequent Acts* toward him aim'd at the ſame end: and becauſe there is nothing removes Man ſo far from that grand purpoſe of his being, as Sin; therefore God has made the ſuppreſſing of that the univerſal intendment of his diſpoſals concern-

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ing us: ſo that the moſt different diſpenſations do ſeverally purſue that one end; *proſperity* and *adverſity* in their ſucceſſive changes are ſent to reclaim us from the *error of our ways*, with this only difference, that the *one* leads, the *other* drives. This is aſſerted by S. *Paul*, who tells us, that *the goodneſs and long-ſuffering of God is to lead us to Repentance*, *Rom.* 2. 5. And alſo that when we are judg'd, *we are chaſtened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the World*, 1 *Cor.* 11. 32. And indeed the whole Scripture runs in the ſame ſtrain, and both from proſperous and adverſe ſucceſſes urges the obligation to obedience. This is the notice God expects we ſhould take of all his dealings towards us. And the want thereof we find often ſharply upbraided by God to the *Jews*; how often does he recount his redeeming them from *Ægypt*, his enſtating them in *Canaan*, and all his wonderful works for them, with an accunſig reflection upon their ingratitude; and that we may know his *Judgments* are no leſs to be accounted for than his *Mercies*, we find him, *Amos* 4. making a *Catalogue* of them, and cloſing every period with this *Pathetick Reproof* of their obſtinacy, *Yet have ye not returned to me, ſaith the Lord.* In ſhort, God requires that we ſhould obſerve every turn of his *hand*, in order to the reforming of our own *lives*, and by the ſeveral *mediums* of Gratitude or fear, infer that *neceſſary concluſion* of a ſincere *univerſal Obedience*; and the neglect of this is the crime the *Pſalmiſt* mentions, *Pſal.* 28. 5. with ſo ſevere a menace, *They*

*regard*

*regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands.*

AND as this is requir'd from ſingle Perſons, ſo alſo from Societies and Communities, which as they are in their publick Capacities the moſt eminent Subjects of Judgments or Mercies, ſo are they the moſt eminently accountable for both. And though the Neglect and Abuſe of Gods methods be a very provoking *guilt* when 'tis only *perſonal*, yet is it much more ſo, when it becomes *national*: And therefore as it is every man's concern for his own *peculiar*, to examine how he has anſwered God's methods towards him, ſo is it an enquiry very pertinent in relation to the *Publick* alſo; eſpecially where the diſpenſations have been remarkable and extraordinary; in which reſpect the *Inquiſition* cannot appear more neceſſary for any than *this Nation*; upon which conſideration I hope the Reader will think it no unpardonable digreſſion, if we a while turn aſide after it.

IT is the *affirmation of our bleſſed Saviour*, that *where much is given, there ſhall be much requir'd*; a thing ſo conſonant with natural Equity, that we all give our ſuffrage to it, by making it the meaſure of our expectations in ſecular things, wherein every man looks for *returns* proportionable to his *expence* or Induſtry. The Husbandman expects a *Crop* anſwerable to his *Seed* and *Labour*: and in the nobler *cultures* of the Mind, we juſtly exact of our Pupils to let their *manners* atteſt the *diſcipline* they have been under: According to which eſtimate we muſt reſolve, that God's expectations

ſtations from *us* of *this Nation* cannot but be very high, there being no people under the Sun, whom he has more ſignaliz'd as *his own immediate* care, on whom the *Divine Oeconomy* has more conſtantly and even ſolicitouſly attended in all the variety of ſeaſonable and powerful *applications*.

I SHALL not aſſume the work of a *Chronicle*, by giving a ſeries of all thoſe Mercies we receiv'd in the loins of our Anceſtors; and of which we have provided one unhappy memorial, I mean our nauſeating and deſpiſing them; it having been the buſineſs of our days, to diſ-intail thoſe two moſt ineſtimable Bleſſings, of a *pure Religion* and *outward Peace*, which our immediate Progenitors left us; and to derive to our poſterity the contrary miſchief of impiety and confuſion.

BUT not to ravel ſo far back, I ſhall confine my reflections to ſo late a date, that I ſhall not need to beſpeak the faith afforded to *Hiſtorians*; ſcarce any that can be my *Reader*, but is qualified to be my *witneſs* too; and muſt acknowledge that there has on God's part been no method wanting that might purifie us to himſelf *a peculiar People zealous of good works*. To that end of refining and cleanſing us it was, that he kept us ſo long in the *furnace*, permitted us to thoſe many *Fiery trials* of our late calamitous days. 'Twere impertinent here to give a deſcription of *thoſe ſufferings*, which every man's memory can ſo readily repreſent to him: or to paint that *Flame* whoſe ſcorchings we have felt; 'tis enough to ſay, that *God* appear'd

in them, earneſtly induſtrious to have reduced us; like a skilful Captain, beſieg'd us cloſely, ſtraitned us ſo in all our Intereſts, that it was ſcarce poſſible for us to fly any where but to himſelf. Indeed he that would make up an exact Catalogue of our Calamities, muſt calculate in how many inſtances humane nature may be paſſive; there being ſcarce any of our ſuffering capacities, to which they were not liberally apportioned, our *Eſtates*, our *Perſons*, our *Friends*, and which is more than all, our *Conſciences*, all groaning under the weight of that *Yoke*, which our own Sins prepar'd, and other men's ſins put on. Which way ſoever we look'd, we ſaw nothing but that which might conſume our *Eyes*, and grieve our *Hearts*: if on the Church, we ſaw that torn by *Schiſm*, ſpoil'd by *Sacrilege*; the abomination of deſolation ſtanding in the Holy place, and the *houſe of Prayer* made in the moſt literal ſenſe *a den of Thieves*. If on the State, we ſaw the *breath* of our Noſtrils, the *Anointed of the Lord* taken in their *Pits*, Impriſon'd and Arraign'd, and barbarouſly *Murder'd*, by thoſe who ſlew him, like the *Heir* in the Goſpel, that they might ſeize on his *Inheritance*. We ſaw this and all other Miſchiefs eſtabliſh'd *by a Law*, and made as irreverſible as powerful malice could render them. And now in ſuch a diſtreſs, who would not think that ſuch a neceſſity ſhould have become our virtue? and ſo perfect a deſtitution compell'd our reſort to the Divine Aid? And as little oppreſt States us'd to make themſelves homagers to the *Romans*,

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to engage their protection; ſo we ſhould have made an entire ſurrendry of our ſelves to *God*, that we might have gain'd a title to his reſcues and deliverances.

THIS genuine and kindly effect I doubt not but it had in *ſome*, I would fain think in *many*; but we are not now conſidering *particulars*, but the *community*; and therefore how ſincere ſoever ſuch perſonal Reformations were they muſt not come under the account of publick and general, unleſs for their Number and Eminency they had been ſufficient to have overwhelmed the contrary perverſeneſs: Many there might be whoſe hearts as 'tis ſaid of *Joſiah*'s, (2 *Chron.* 34.27.) did melt, and yet the far greater number of the obdurate ſtill juſtly denominate us *a ſtiff necked People*; an Epithet wherewith God often reproaches the *Jews*, and ſure we have no leſs evidenced our Title to it: For alas, as if we had meant to revenge the inexorableneſs of our Oppreſſors towards us, in our obſtinacy to God; as if when we could keep nothing elſe, we had yet reſerved this ſullen comfort, of having our hearts impregnable, we made a ſhift to hold out againſt all theſe Batteries: there was little *appearance*, and leſs *reality* of Repentance; and if ſome of our *luſts* were at all leſs raging, 'twas only becauſe they were ſtarved in to a little tameneſs, the *ſupplies* cut off which ſhould maintain our Riot: but when any recruits could be had, they were devoted that way, and even in the worſt of times we miſt not to be as luxurious as we were able: and as though we reſolv'd

that *vice*, like the *Sea*, ſhould gain in one part what it loſt in another; we took order that what was thus inevitably defaulk'd from thoſe *expenſive* Sins, ſhould be made up in the *cheaper*: we could curſe and ſwear, and blaſpheme in ſpight of *Sequeſtration*, and this wretched Immunity we made abundant uſe of, till we even became *Proverbial* for it; and gave our Enemies pretence to faſten it on us as our diſtinctive Character. Yet to ſhew our ſelves generous ſinners, there was *one vice* we bought at a dear rate, I mean our as imprudent, as unchriſtian animoſities, and *piques* among our ſelves; a ſin that helpt to revenge all the reſt: and was as well upon a humane, as divine, account, a grand inſtrument of our *ruine*. To theſe we may add our impatient murmurs at our ſufferings, which did in ſome work ſo prepoſterouſly, as to reconcile them to the Inflicters, made them unworthily deſert that cauſe, they found chargeable to maintain, and contrary to the advice of *Solomon*, Chuſe the ways of thoſe Oppreſſors whoſe proſperity they envied, *Prov.* 3. But of theſe *real Apoſtates* the number I hope was not great: I wiſh I could ſay ſo alſo of thoſe *ſeeming Deſerters*, whoſe knees bowed to *Baal*, though their hearts did not: who belyed their own *loyalty*, and in a ſhew of compliance proſtituted *conſcience* in ſeveral Engagements as inconſiſtent with each other, as they all were with Duty; and ſuch as they pretended no excuſe for their *taking*, but their reſolutions of *breaking*. It was indeed a ſad ſpectacle to ſee what ſholes every menacing

Edict

Edict brought in; while men ran in as much haſte to take the opportunity of *Perjury*, as the Primitive Chriſtians were wont to do of *Martyrdom*: Indeed herein we ſeem'd to invade our enemies peculiar, would not ſuffer them to enjoy thoſe marks of diſtinction they had framed to themſelves; ſo that as far as *Oaths* could ſignifie, we were all *one Party*. And yet while we thus diſclaim'd God's reliefs by theſe indirect attempts of our own, we took it very ill that he left us to the ſucceſs of them: That he proſper'd not thoſe methods he had interdicted, and made us Triumphant, not only over our Enemies but himſelf too: and upon this ſcore many mutinous *blaſphemies* were utter'd, and perhaps ſome more thought, though I confeſs generally we were not ſo modeſt, as to ſtick at ſaying the worſt we could think; and indeed they that heard the frequent doubts Men own'd of God's juſtice, providence, nay his very being, wou'd not think they ſuppreſt any thing as too ill to be ſpoken. We laid boundleſs expectations upon the juſtice of our *cauſe*, and as if we had extremely oblig'd God by not being *Traitors* or *Schiſmaticks*, thought he wrong'd us extremely that he made us not *Victors*. *Samuel* tells *Saul*, that *Rebellion was like Witchcraft*: But we ſeem'd to think *Loyalty* was ſo: that like a Spell, it was to keep us invulnerable, not only againſt our enemies but our ſelves: and ſo countercharm all our crimes that they ſhould only be active to pleaſe not hurt us. But if in the laſt place we reflect on our ſelves

ſelves even in relation to that *cauſe* in which we ſo much confided, 'tis to be fear'd all Men will not be able to evince they ſuffer'd for *God* and the *King*, though they did it in their *quarrel*: 'tis the Intent muſt denominate whoſe Martyrs they were, it being too frequent for private paſſions and intereſts to march under the banner of conſcience; and we call that ſometimes taking up the *Croſs*, which is only the taking up an *animoſity* or *humour*. Indeed 'tis not poſſible for any to be God's *Martyr*, who is not firſt his *Servant*; none of us will ſuffer the greateſt things for a perſon for whom we will not do the leaſt; and 'tis abſurd Hypocriſie for a Man to pretend he has left *all* for God, who we ſee cannot be wooed to leave the moſt deſpicable *luſt* for him. he that will not part with the noiſe of a loud *Oath*, the pleaſure of an intemperate Cup, the applauſe of a profane *Jeſt* for God, will ſurely much leſs expoſe his *liberty*, his *eſtate*, his *life* for him: and therefore what hazards ſoever any Man ran in any of thoſe, he can with no juſtice ſet it upon God's account, unleſs he can produce ſuch other acts of obedience, as may witneſs this to be true and genuine. And upon this trial, I fear *God's party* will appear to have been but ſmall among us, and perhaps the *King*'s not much greater, it being not very probable, that thoſe ſhould have any great ſenſe of duty to him, that had none to *God*; or that thoſe ſhould religiouſly revere one Commandment, who deſpiſed the other *nine*. But we need not the help of inference and probability in

this matter, the mutinous and inſolent behaviour of many who profeſt loyalty, did too clearly evince it: And as it is ſaid of *Joab*, that he turn'd after *Adonijah*, though he turn'd not after *Abſalom*, 1 *Kings* 2. 28. and ſome of ours had little private rebellions of their own, even while they oppos'd the more publick. I love not to paſs cenſures on Mens thoughts, yet I doubt ſome would be too conſcious to confute me, if I ſhould ſay there wanted not thoſe, who owed their *zeal* to their *Spleen*, and did not ſo much love thoſe they fought for, as hated thoſe they fought *againſt*. And it may perhaps deſerve enquiry, whether that demure *pretence of holineſs* their Adverſaries had put on, did not more avert ſome of our *Libertines* fromt hem than all their *real crimes*: They perhaps ſo far miſtook them, as to ſuſpect they might be in earneſt, when they profeſt to advance the *power of Godlineſs*, and at that took an *Alarm*, and ſuch Men (if ſuch there were) contended not for the Liberty of their *Country*, but their *Luſts*; and could with no Juſtice, expect either a reputation, or ſucceſs from that cauſe which they at firſt helpt to defame and defeat. I am loth to go farther, and ſuſpect that even ſome of the devouter ſort were inſpir'd more by the Spirit of *oppoſition* than *Piety*; yet I confeſs 'tis hard to reſiſt that ſurmiſe, when 'tis conſider'd that our *Liturgie* never had its due veneration, but when the *Directory* was ſet up againſt it. Indeed he that ſhall remember how our *private Oratories* were then throng'd and crouded;

crouded; and ſhall now compare it with our *empty Churches*, will be tempted to think our *devotion* was of that ſort, which is excited by *interdict*, and deadned by invitations; a perverſe kind of Zeal, kindled only by *Antiperiſtaſis* or colliſion; none of that pure flame which deſcends from Heaven. And then as our *Saviour* in another caſe ſays, *If the light that is in thee be darkneſs how great is that darkneſs*, Matth. 6. If this fairer and more ſpecious part of us were thus reproveable, how obnoxious were the other? And if our Earneſtneſs in a righteous cauſe, by its ſiniſter motives or adherencies be unable to juſtifie it ſelf, how ſhall it bear that heavier task we laid on it, and plead for our other Guilts?

THIS is the true, though not full account of our behaviour under *God's diſcipline*, thus did we fructifie upon his pruning us; brought forth indeed nothing but degenerous *fruit*. The *Holy Writ* leaves it as a brand of moſt inveterate Impiety upon *Ahaz*, that *in the time of his diſtreſs he ſinn'd yet more againſt the Lord*, 2 *Chron.* 28. 22. and ſure we have too juſt title to the ſame Character of infamy; thoſe ſufferings which were ſent to chaſtiſe our ſins, ſerv'd but to encreaſe them, and like the *Iſraelites* in the *Brick-kilns*, they multiplied the more for their oppreſſion; we debauch'd even our *Executioners*, and made every new *calamity* ſupply us with ſome new *vice*. And now when God's *rod* was thus deſpis'd, we were in all reaſon to expect he ſhould draw his *ſword*, revenge our reſi-

ſiſtance of his methods, by ſomewhat we could not reſiſt, make our *Plagues* as obſtinate as our *ſelves*, and involve us in hopeleſs inevitable ruine. *This certain fearful* looking for of *Judgment. Heb.* 10. 27. was all we had left our ſelves, of all the rich patrimony we were once poſſeſt of; and our preſent miſery ſeem'd impoſſible to expire any way but by dying into greater.

BUT as great Artificers are us'd to magnifie their Art, by chuſing the moſt unlikely materials; ſo did it pleaſe God in this total indiſpoſedneſs of ours, when we were ſo unapt ſubjects to illuſtrate his mercy, and as if he deſign'd this *national deliverance* ſhould (in its proportion) be the Tranſcript of our more *univerſal Redemption*, he viſited us not only in this ſtate of miſery, but enmity; when we had ſet our ſelves in defiance of his *judgments*, he laid as it were an Ambuſh of *mercy* for us, and ſurpriz'd us with ſafety: by ſuch undiſcernable *ways return'd the captivity of our Sion*, that *we were* indeed deliver'd *like them that dream*. Pſal. 126. 1. gave us a *victory* without a *war*; without the intervention of *garments r lled in blood. Eſay* 9. 5. inveſted us in our Triumphant robes, and in a word, made us inſenſibly to glide into our long forgotten proſperity.

AND now who can imagine, but this miraculous Mutation *without us* muſt alſo work a Change *within us*? Indeed they muſt have a very ill opinion of humane nature, that can think it poſſible it ſhould have perverſeneſs enough to reſiſt ſuch endearments; ſuch kindly heat muſt needs

needs be ſuppos'd to melt us; and if before our Pride diſdain'd to be *compell'd*, yet even that ſtubborneſt part of us cannot object againſt the being *courted into amendment*. So that when God has thus yielded to our terms, left us not ſo much as a *Punctilio* in our way to Piety, 'tis but a reaſonable expectation, we ſhould embrace it with as great an Earneſtneſs, as it was formerly *rejected* by us.

AND would God we could ſay we did ſo; but alas, we ſtill affect Prodigies, take a kind of wanton Joy in defeating God's deſigns, and as if we aſpir'd to vye Miracles with him, have made our *returns* as unparallel'd as his *mercies*; ſo that the ſum of our account is this. No Nation was ever more ſignaliz'd by *God's goodneſs*, or its *own perverſeneſs*, it being hard to determine in which of thoſe reſpects it is moſt *eminent*. That this is in the general perfectly true there are too many particulars ready to teſtifie, indeed a whole cloud of Witneſſes do concur to the proving the charge. I ſhall not undertake to examine *all*, yet *ſome* of the principal it will not be amiſs to take notice of.

BEFORE we enquire into the *uſe* we have made of God's Mercies, let us a little conſider what our *ſenſe* of them is; and ſure of all the *interrogatories* we can put to our ſelves, this appears the eaſieſt, the moſt gentle favourable Teſt, that even our own partialities could elect for us; it being ſo natural to Men in miſery to value a reſcue, and celebrate their deliverers, that the

contrary would be the only wonder; we ſee even the *Jews*, who were none of the moſt malleable people, yet *deliverances* made impreſſions on them, ſet them to their *devout proceſſions* and *ſolemn hymns* in praiſe of God: Nay, ſuch a piece of native Religion is this, that the *Heathens* exemplifie it to us. The *Philiſtines* when they had taken *Sampſon*, magnified their *Dagon*, as having *delivered their enemy and the deſtroyer of their country into their hands*, Judg. 16. 24. So upon the victory over *Saul*, 1 *Sam.* 31. 9. *they ſent round about to publiſh it in the houſe of their Idols.* And in all Stories we find, the *Heathen Altars* were never ſo loaden with *Sacrifices*, as upon ſuch occaſions: And the Goſpel tells us, that thoſe on whom Chriſt beſtowed miraculous cures, were ſo tranſported with them, that their gratitude ſupplanted their obedience, and made them notwithſtanding his prohibition, proclaim the wonders he had done for them: But I fear if we reflect upon our ſelves, we ſhall not be able to match any of theſe inſtances. 'Tis true, our late *change* was entertain'd with a Joy *profuſe* enough, but not enough *religious*. We ſaw that great things were done for us, and thereof we rejoyced; but we did not ſo much conſider that the *Lord* had done them, *Pſal.* 114. and ſo were rather affected with the *rarity* and *profitableneſs*, than the *mercy* and *kindneſs* of the Diſpenſation: and tho' the care of our *Governours* have provided for the religious part alſo, aſſign'd *days of Purim* for the perpetual commemoration of our *deliverance*,

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yet our ſlight obſervance of them does too fully evince our Joy was meerly ſecular; and ſurely he that obſerv'd the numerous and loud *acclamations* in the *ſtreets*, and the few faint *Hallelujahs* in the *Temple*, muſt needs ſay they were very diſproportionate, and that how much ſoever the moſt of us rejoyc'd, it was not in the *Lord*: and then we are not to wonder that it was ſo tranſient; ſince it was merely *earthly*, it muſt needs partake of the fadingneſs of its *original*: whereas had we deriv'd it higher, it would have been *laſting* and *durable*, it could not ſo ſuddenly have expir'd, had we fetcht it from him, *in whoſe preſence is fulneſs of joy, and at whoſe right hand are pleaſures for evermore.* But alas, our tranſports were ſuch as exhauſted themſelves in their own noiſe, we expreſt our Joy in *Bonfires*, and it vapour'd away in the *ſmoke*; there wanted but that mixture of Piety which ſhould have fix'd that *volatile Paſſion*, and we who at firſt were much more glad than thankful, within a very ſhort time ceaſed to be either.

AND then as *violent Heats* when once expir'd, are ſucceeded by the *extremeſt Cold*: ſo has it fared with us; we fell from our *Extaſies* not to the mean, but the contrary extreme; our vaſt complacencies at their parting, carried with them even ordinary contentation, and left us not only joyleſs, but impatient. It was indeed matter of equal ſhame and wonder, to ſee a ſcene ſo ſuddenly chang'd, wherein as in many other inſtances, we ſeem'd to have tranſcrib'd the co-

py of the mutinous *Iſraelites*, whom we find in the very ſame Chapter, *Exod.* 15. triumphing and repining; and no ſooner were the Timbrels out of their *hands*, but Complaints were in their *mouths*, verſe 24. *What ſhall we drink?* And in the beginning of the next with the ſame querulous importunity they require meat. But not to wrong them in the compariſon, their murmurs had ſome extenuating circumſtances which ours have not; they lookt indeed with ſome appetite upon *Ægypt*, and made ſome propoſals of Return, but it was while they ſuffer'd the hardſhips of the Wilderneſs; they preferr'd a repleted *ſlavery*, before a hungry *freedom*; but even they were not ſo frantick in their Mutinies, as to make any ſuch offer in *Canaan*, or have any Emulation to the *Garlick* and *Onions*, amidſt the affluence of *Milk* and *Honey*: No, 'tis we alone that have the unhappy skill of reconciling the ſins of *Canaan*, and the *Wilderneſs*; murmur as much under our *Vines* and *Fig-trees*, as at *Rephidim*, or *Marah*, and make all the out-cries of *want* and *ſlavery*, whilſt we wallow in the utmoſt luxury of *plenty* and *freedom*. I need not here ſpecifie the particulars of our Murmurings, this diſcourſe being not likely to find many whoſe innocence will need that information, this *malignant humor* having ſpread ſo, that 'tis now become almoſt a ſcandalous (becauſe a ſingular) thing to be contented. And certainly a conſidering Foreigner, that ſhould come among us, could not but be aſtoniſh'd to ſee a Nation ſo full of all thoſe things which uſe to create tem-

temporal ſatisfactions, and yet to find no body in it ſatisfied; to ſee ſo many parties among us, and none proſperous. This is ſuch a riddle as would tempt a Man to ſuſpect his *ſenſes*, and think we had all this while but dreamt of a *reſtoration*: been under the deluſion the *Prophet* deſcribes of the *hungry and thirſty man, that at his waking finds he is empty and his ſoul hath appetite*, *Eſay* 29. 8. 'Tis a ſad, but viſible Truth, that all that God has done for us, hath been ſo far from filling our deſires, that it has only ſerv'd to enlarge them: for I appeal to any of our loudeſt mutineers, whether if ſome years ſince the preſent ſtate of affairs had been repreſented to them, dreſt in the worſt circumſtances they now complain of, they would not then have thought it extremely amiable, worth *Rachel*'s prize of ſeven years more hardſhip; nay, whether they would not willingly have made ſome abatements, relinquiſh'd part of what they now enjoy, to have had the reſt ſecur'd; And when God has granted us all we then ask'd, ſhall we murmur becauſe we could *now* perhaps ask ſomething more; and like ingrate Debtors, pick a quarrel to evade payment; was it not enough that he engaged his *Omnipotence* for us, but muſt his *Omniſcience* alſo be preſt upon the ſame ſervice? and provide all he could foreſee we could wiſh? Alas, do we think we have the ſame hank upon God, that ſome Gallants have on their truſting Merchants, that upon peril of loſing all former ſcores, he muſt ſtill go on to ſupply us? Shall we think nothing

thing fit for oblivion but our obligations? And in this perverſe ſenſe tranſcribe S. *Paul*, *Phil.* 3. 13. *forgetting thoſe things which are behind, reach forward to the things that are before*: this indeed too fully ſpeaks us the off-ſpring of our firſt Parents; we can find no guſt in all the fruits of *Paradiſe*, if any one be denied us; and ſtill look not on what we have, but what we want; and as it is obſerv'd of the greedier ſort of creatures, that they reliſh not one bit for the vehement expectation of another: So is it with us, we *devour*, but do not *enjoy* our Bleſſings; and to require him to ſatisfie us, is to aſſign him the *Poets* Hell, ſet him with *Belus*'s Daughters to the task of filling a *ſieve* with Water, or rolling *Syſiphus*'s ſtone; our growing appetites ſtill keeping us empty and reſtleſs amidſt all endeavours to make us otherwiſe; ſo that whereas God uſes to commit his *favours* to Men, as *ſeed* to the Earth, in expectation of an *harveſt*, ſome fruits of gratitude and obedience; they ſeem with us raher to be flung into a *Gulph*, whoſe property is only to *ſwallow*, never to *fructifie*.

I KNOW mens minds are ſo poſſeſt with their diſcontents, our daily mutinous blaſts have puft up and ſwelled our grievances to ſuch vaſtneſs, that he muſt expect to be very impatiently heard, that ſhall attempt to repreſent them in a leſſer ſize; yet ſure 'twere not impoſſible even upon a direct view, to demonſtrate them very *light* and *moderate*: but upon a comparative, perfectly *trivial* and inconſiderable; and 'tis a little

little ſtrange, that we who bare our *late ſuffering eſtate* with ſo much Impatience, ſhould not have impreſſions enough left in our memory to confront to all our *preſent regrets*. Do we not quietly now poſſeſs the fruits of our own, or our Progenitors *induſtry*, without danger of any Sequeſtration, but what our own Luxuries inflict? Are not our Perſons at freedom; deliver'd from that kind word, and unkind thing, SECURING? So that when we riſe in the Morning, we need not fear our next lodging ſhall be in the *Gaol* or Dungeon; nor when we ſit down to our Meal, ſuſpect the intruſion of *arm'd uninvited Gueſts*, who ere wiles, we know, were wont to ſurpriſe us, as the Plague did the *Iſraelites, even while the meat was yet in our mouths*; are not our Lives under the cuſtody of known *Laws*, ſo that no Man is in danger that will but keep himſelf within thoſe *Boundaries*; nor need fear to be mockt into his grave by Shews and Pageantries of Juſtice; and beſides theſe real *eſcapes* from *ſlavery*, are we not reſcued from the moſt imbittering circumſtance of it, the having *ſervants rule over us*? A thing which rendred our ſubjection as mean and ſervile, as it was ſharp and preſſing, and which we were then ſo ſenſible of, that it never miſt to bring up the rear of our Complaints. Laſtly, if we reflect upon our higher ſpiritual concerns, are we not freed from thoſe boiſterous robuſt *temptations*, which with the violence of Famine and Sword, Beggary and Death aſſaulted our *conſtancy*, and left no mean between

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Martyrdom and Apoſtaſie? are we not alſo reſtor'd to all thoſe ſpiritual advantages which we once profeſt ſo much to value? That *well of life* now lies open before us, after which we once panted like the *Hart* after the *water ſprings*; our ancient *worſhip* is reviv'd, and wants only our attendance to make it ſolemn; whereas the *abomination of Deſolation* ſtood in the holy place, our prayers were turned to ſin; needed, but were denied the *Liturgy* to pray againſt them, or atone their guilts. We have no longer *ſtones* given us for *bread*, nor experiment that ſad riddle, of being at once cloyed and ſtarved; amidſt exceſs of preaching ſuffering a Famine of the Word. And now are all theſe worth no regard? If they are not, why did we exclaim ſo loudly when we wanted them? If they are, why are we ſtill as querulous now we have them? 'Tis ſure theſe include all our great and ſubſtantial intereſts as Men, and Chriſtians, and thoſe being provided for, 'tis not eaſily imaginable what others we ſhould have important enough to make us querulous, unleſs it be thoſe of Paſſion and Humour. One man's *ambition* perhaps wants a ſatisfaction, another man's *avarice*, a third's *ſpleen*; and this *diſcord* makes up the very unmuſical harmony of our *murmurs*. If we ſee but a *Mordecai* in the King's Gate whom we wiſh removed, we can like *Haman* find no guſt in any thing we enjoy. If we ſee ſome who we think have born leſs of the burden and heat of the day, rewarded equally or perhaps above our ſelves, we are ſure to make out the Pa-

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rable, by murmuring at the good Man of the houſe: Or if *Nineveh* be ſpar'd, if all be not executed to whom we have denounc'd deſtruction we, like *Jonah*, ſiit down in a ſullen diſcontent, and grow weary of our lives, becauſe others are permitted to enjoy theirs. To theſe and other heads of the like nature, 'tis apparent our *grievances* may be reduced; and then if the balance be put into any diſpaſſionate hand, 'tis ſure they can never become a counterpoize to the other real benefits we enjoy, but will in the *Prophet*'s phraſe appear *lighter than vanity and nothing*.

BUT I ſuppoſe ſome will ſay, 'tis not only *preſent* uneaſineſſes of which they are impatient, but the poſſibility of *future*, a fear of relapſing into our former eſtate by the ill managery of our preſent: To theſe I ſhall anſwer, that admit it were ſo, yet ſure 'twill be no wiſdom to anticipate our miſeries, to foreſtal diſcontents, and make foreſight as painful as actual ſuffering. In other forbidden inſtances we chuſe to enjoy the preſent, and with an *Epicurean* indifferency cry, *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die*, 1 *Cor.* 15. 32. How is it that we here become ſo unluckily ſagacious, unleſs it be that murmuring is a Senſuality we account equivalent, nay ſuperior to all rational ſatisfactions; and therefore that we may have no intermiſſion of that delight, ſuborn our fancies to find occaſions, and fetch in from the future thoſe ſupplies which the preſent affords not: But beſides this, I ſhould in the ſecond place ask theſe great *Diviners*, why they do not

alſo

alſo foreſee, that this very *mutinous temper* of theirs is the moſt direct and infallible means of bringing thoſe *miſchiefs* they pretend to fear; that it is ſo, is moſt evident, and ſo well obſerv'd by our *Adverſaries*, that there is little doubt, they have not only pleaſure, but deſigns upon it; and to that purpoſe have their *Engines* on work to blow up the *hot Spirits* among us, in expectation from thence to raiſe a *flame*. So blind a thing is *Paſſion*, that it hurries on to the things which in their iſſue we moſt abhor; makes us our Enemies *drudges*, and the *forgers* of our own ſhackles; and whilſt we cry out of petty Indulgencies, we our ſelves give them in the *lump*, what we grudge them in *parcels*: This is a miſerable infatuation, and while we act thus unreaſonably, we are ſure no competent declaimers againſt ill managery. But beſides this natural effect of our murmurs, we are alſo to remember that there is a Divine vengeance attending it: when *bounties* and *largeſſes* are quarrel'd at, we neceſſitate God to another method, nay indeed, not only his *vengeance*, but even his *kindneſs* ſeem to ſuggeſt it; when he ſees our conſtitutions ſuch, that his gentle applications work contrary effects, 'tis very appoſite for him to try whether the *Antiperiſtaſis* will operate on the other ſide; if we ſmart thus under *lenitives*, 'tis but fit to eſſay, if *corroſives* will eaſe us; and the only remaining experiment for the making us *happy* is to make us *miſerable*.

BUT would God we might yet prevent the need of ſuch unkindly *expedients*, and by a ſober eſtimate,

eſtimate, and thankful ſenſe of what we have, provide to conſerve it: not faſtidiouſly deſpiſe great and eminent *bleſſings*, becauſe perhaps they come not home to every part of our *wiſhes*. Alas, thoſe plenary ſatisfactions agree not with the nature of Earthly things: 'Tis an obſervation long ſince rais'd from the Globular and Triangular form of the World and our Hearts, that 'tis impoſſible the one ſhould be filled with the other, there will ſtill be ſome angles, ſome vacuities left; our very *acceſſions* create new *wants*; and like an unſound limb, the healing of one Sore is the breaking out of another. Every thing under the *Moon* partakes of her *viciſſitudes*, augments and decreaſes only with this difference, that though their *wanes* be to as low a degree as hers, they never are perfectly *at the full*. There never was, nor never will be a State here compleatly happy: and as the *Philoſopher* handſomely reproach'd the impatience of the *Perſian* King for the death of his Wife, by undertaking to revive her, if he could help him but to the names of *three* Men, that had never griev'd, to write upon her *Tomb*; ſo ſurely we may make the like offer to our *malecontents*, and engage to redeem all their uneaſineſs, if they can point us out (I ſay not three, but) *one age* wherein there were no *complaints*. What then are our clamorous Repinings, but ſo many loud *invectives* againſt God's *decree*; a deſire to ſubvert his fundamental *Law*, and confound the *diſtinction* he has irreverſibly ſet between our *Earthly* and our *Heavenly* ſtate? And alas,

of it has now ſown the ſeeds. We ſee here what our thankfulneſs is, for thoſe eminent miraculous mercies we have receiv'd, and the account of that is an unhappy *ſpecimen*, what we are like to find, when we ſurvey the uſes we have made of them, which God knows have been ſo unnatural and perverſe, as does too fully parallel the former inſtance.

FOR firſt, if we reflect upon our *ſpirtual bleſſings*, what has the enjoyment of thoſe advantages produced, but the contempt of them? We have an eaſie free acceſs to God in his Sanctuary, our *Churches* are no longer *Garriſons* to keep out the worſhip to which they were devoted, but like *hoſpitable doors*, are open to the regular piety of any that will enter. And now we have this liberty, now the *flaming ſword* is removed, we have loſt all appetite to the *Tree of Life*, can willingly let thoſe *Everlaſting Gates* (as the *Pſalmiſt* ſtyles them) *Pſal.* 21. *ſtand* as everlaſtingly *open*, ere we enter them: And though the Fabricks are by God's Providence reſcued from their duſt and ruines, yet many of us endeavour to reduce them to a yet worſe deſolation, ſtrive to depopulate thoſe ſacred Manſions, and execute againſt them that *Prophetick Threat* concerning *Nineveh*, *Nahum* 1. *Leave them empty, void and waſte.* And indeed ſo they are, if not in an abſolute, yet in a comparative ſence; for could we at any time of *Divine Service* make an eſtimate of *all* the perſons that are abſent, 'twould ſcarce be diſcern'd that *any* are there; were all corners ranſackt, what a multitude

multitude of *Recuſants* ſhould we find upon a far differing account from that of Conſcience? Some we ſhould ſee ſtretching themſelves upon their beds, keeping a Sabbath indeed, but to their *ſloth*, not their *God*; others perhaps we may find rous'd from their Couches, upon the ſummons not of *Religion* but *Vanity*; ſome new garment is to be fitted, ſome exotick dreſs eſſayed, and they who grudge *one hour* to the Preacher's glaſs, can ſpend *many* at their own; where they are ſo taken up with their *Idolatries* to themſelves, that they think of no other worſhip; nay, as the world goes, 'twere well this were the worſt diverſion, that ſome did not keep from Church, that they might in the interim, defile thoſe leſſer Temples of God they carry about them, and cut themſelves off from the Communion of *Chriſt's Body* to to make themſelves *members of an Harlot*: or that others were not *Bacchus* his Votaries when they ſhould be *God's*, ſpend that time in their frantick revels, and ſing a *Dithyrambick* inſtead of *Te Deum*. As for the *Mammoniſt*, if he keep any holy day, 'tis like the *Iſraelites* to his *Gods of Gold*, *Exod.* 32. 31. He is looking with veneration on his Idoliz'd Treaſure, numbering thoſe bags he dares not uſe, or perhaps with a more active Zeal purſuing the means of encreaſing them. Thus alas, may we go from one to another, and as it was in *Ezekiel's* Viſion, ſee ſtill greater abominations, *Ezek.* 8. And certainly that All-ſeeing Eye, which diſcerns what multitudes do thus buſie themſelves, at the times even of his ſolemn-

eſt worſhip, cannot but adjudge us moſt profane deſpiſers of his mercy in reſtoring it: Yet would to God 'twere only the *abſent* upon whom that ſentence would fall; but alas, the behaviour of many in the Church does too loudly teſtifie how little of devotion brings them thither, and at how mean a rate they value all that is done there: Thoſe *Eyes* which there ſhould wait on God, as thoſe *of a Servant on the hands of his Maſter*, *Pſal.* 123. 1. are rolling about to fetch in all the Vanities and Temptations which can occur to them, and look *every way*, but *towards Heaven*. Our *Tongues* which ſhould be touch'd with a Coal from the Altar, devoted wholly to Hymns and Prayers, are buſied in *private Colloquies* with thoſe about us: Buſineſs, News, nay all the impertinent chat of our moſt vacant hours, is then taken up to entertain us; ſo that he who would know the *talk of the Town* or neighbourhood, need go neither to Exchange nor Market, the *Church* will as certainly ſupply him: And this ill employment of our *Tongues*, engages the like of our *Ears*, which when they ſhould be hearkening what the Lord God will ſay concerning us, are liſtening to thoſe *vain diſcourſes* we hold with one another; from all which outward indecencies we may too ſurely collect the outward irreverence of our heart. And is it poſſible that this ſhould now be the Temper of *thoſe*, who not long ſince ſeem'd to bewail their *excluſion* from thoſe ſacred Aſſemblies? did we long for *them* as *David* for the *waters of Bethlehem*, when they appear'd unattainable,

ab'e, and when they are brought to us, refuſe to taſte them, pour them out not as he did in *devotion*, but in *contempt?* 'Tis true indeed, in *temporal* delights *poſſeſſion* uſually proves a nauſeating thing, and takes off our *appetite*; but it uſes not to be ſo in *ſpiritual*, whoſe peculiar property it is, not to ſa:iate, but excite by fruition: But alas, though the things we converſe with are *ſpiritual*, our Hearts are *carnal*, and that is the cauſe why inſtead of crying out with the *Pſalmiſt*, *When ſhall I come to appear in the preſence of God? Pſal.* 42. We, like thoſe in *Malachy*, Chap. 1. 13. *Snuff at his ſervice, and ſay, What a wearineſs is it?* A wearineſs indeed it appears in the literal ſence with many, who ſleep at it as men over-labour'd, and ſcarce take ſo ſound repoſe in their own houſes as in God's; indeed ſuch is the variety of rude behaviour that is there us'd, that ſhould an *unbeliever* come into our Aſſemblies, he muſt ſurely (as S. *Paul* ſuppoſes in another caſe, 1 *Cor.* 14. 23.) ſay, *we are mad*; to ſee ſome gazing, ſome whiſpering, ſome laughing, others ſleeping, and perhaps the far fewer number praying, is ſuch a *medly*, as the moſt brutiſh *Idolaters* never admitted in their *worſhips*; and the way of worſhipping *Mercury*, by throwing ſtones, or *Hercules* by curſing, is a ſober and decent kind of ſervice compar'd with this. And now alas, when will the *Church* recover its ancient Title, and become the *Houſe of Prayer?* 'Tis ſure according to the preſent appearance it may have many more proper names, that being the leaſt part of the bu-

ſineſs done in it: 'Tis true, there are ſome that make it a *Sanctuary*, but 'tis only againſt the penalties of the *Law*, or reproach of arrant *Atheiſm*; they come to ſave their money or their credit; others perhaps ſhun the ſolitarineſs of being at home, and come not as to a place of *Devotion*, but *Concourſe*; and 'tis to be doubted. ſome viſit that place as they do many others, becauſe they have nothing elſe to do: They want their week-days diverſion, and ſo are driven thither upon mere deſtitution of more grateful entertainments; make it a kind of *Sunday Play houſe*, ſit there as Spectators or Judges, to ſee the *Company* or cenſure the *Preacher*, but never remember that themſelves have any other part to act; or are beheld by *Him*, who will not always be patient of ſuch profanation; but will, as the *Scripture* ſpeaks, *Repay them to their face, who thus contemn him to his.* We know among men, every one counts his Houſe his fortreſs; and an Affront offered him *there*, doubles the Injury, and is not only a *contempt*, but an *invaſion:* and ſhall it not be a proportionable enhanſement with *God* alſo, thus to defie him *within his own doors*, and approach his preſence in an impious bravery, the more fully to ſhew him, how little we regard him? At this rate while we addreſs our ſelves we may as ill manner'd Gueſts be *forbid his houſe*: Interrogated by God as the *Jews* were, *Iſa.* 1. *Why doſt thou tread my Courts?* A total abandoning of Worſhip being more fair and ingenuous than ſuch Devotion: wherein like the *barbarous ſouldiers*, we

we bring Chriſt a *Scepter*, only to *ſmite* him on the head with it: and make a preface of *homage*, to give our ſelves the ſport of the *mockery*: nay, 'tis ſadly to be fear'd, that God may *thruſt* us out of his Houſe, *ſhut* his Doors againſt us, *reſcue* his Service and himſelf from our profanation, and put us again under the ſame, (or a worſe interdict than that) which lately lay upon us.

HAVING now ſeen our ſcandalous Irreverence towards God's Worſhip in *general*, 'tis too eaſie to make Application to the *ſeveral parts* of it; every one of which muſt neceſſarily partake of the contempt which falls upon the whole; for while we bring no thoughts but *ſecular* with us; thoſe are equally diſagreeing to all the *Divine* Offices: 'twill be needleſs therefore to trace our wandrings in each of thoſe, ſince our whole *behaviour* in the Church is one great *deviation* from the buſineſs we ſhould come about: yet that ſuperſedes not to every guilty perſon himſelf the neceſſity of a more diſtinct and particular reflection. 'Tis ſure at the *laſt dreadful Audit*, we muſt account for every of thoſe ſpiritual advantages we have abus'd; and alas, what a *diſmal reckoning* will many of us have then to give up, when our *Prayers* which we now turn into Sin, ſhall be turn'd into *Perdition?* And we *who* would not ſupplicate our *God*, ſhall in vain invoke the *mountains and Hills to hide us from the face of the Lamb*, when that Word which we now ſo faſtidiouſly deſpiſe, that it muſt be dreſt up in the colours of humane Rhetorick, to make us at all pa-

tient of it, and becomes then only tolerable to us, when it is fartheſt removed from being God's: when *that word*, as our *Saviour* ſpeaks, *ſhall judge us*, and that gracious *invitation to life* end in that fatal ſentence, *Go ye curſed.* Nay, when our very propitiation ſhall *plead* againſt us, and the crucified Body of our Saviour, which we have *in Effigie* ſo often re-crucified in our unworthy approaches, or impious neglect of the holy *Euchariſt* ſhall *witneſs* againſt us as its *murderers*, when we ſhall be found not *ſprinkled* as with the blood of a *ſacrifice*, but *imbrued* as with that of *ſlaughter:* when all theſe means of our ſalvation, ſhall thus miſerably convert, and from the *ſavour of life*, become that *unto death*, 2 *Cor.* 2. 16. Then we ſhall to our amazement find, how differing our eſtimates of them were from God's; and in his vengeance read the value he put upon them. What then have we now to do, but to anticipate our *dooms day*, and *judge our ſelves that we may not be judged of the Lord?* To make an impartial account of all theſe our profanations, and accuſe our ſelves before his *mercy ſeat*, that ſo we may prevent the arraignment at his *bar of Judgment.* And as Offenders are uſually enjoyn'd to acknowledge their guilts in the very places where they committed them; ſo let us make the *Church* the Scene of our *penitence*, as we have of our *faults:* By our ſtrong crying and tears, deprecate our former indevotion, and by an exemplary Reverence, redreſs the ſcandal of our Profaneneſs. This, and only this is the way to ſecure us againſt

the

the *final* Vengeance of theſe ſins; nay, and againſt the *intermedial* alſo: for we are not to expect that ſo unkind abuſe of mercy ſhall be wholly reſpited to another world, it being ſo exaſperating a *crime*, as muſt in all probability awake God's *fury*, and pull down preſent Judgments. I wiſh the event do not too ſoon atteſt the reaſonableneſs of this ſuppoſal.

IF from our *ſpiritual* Bleſſings, we now deſcend to our *temporal*, we ſhall not appear much better managers of thoſe; they being generally employed to purpoſes the moſt diſtant from thoſe, for which they were given. And firſt for our *Peace*, that great comprehenſive enjoyment, upon which all others are dependent, and which is to our *civil* Capacities, the ſame that *health* is to our *natural*; the thing by which we reliſh and taſte the reſt of our comforts, we may from the Song of *Zachary*, *Luke* 1. Learn for what intent God beſtows it: *Deliverance from enemies* is to no other end, but that we may *ſerve God in holineſs and righteouſneſs all the days of our life*: But alas, he that obſerves how we employ our quiet, muſt ſurely ſay it ſerves little to the advancement either of Holineſs or Righteouſneſs: For the firſt of theſe we have already ſeen, how little of *holineſs* we ſhew even in that place where nothing elſe ſhould be admitted; and we are not ſo prepoſterouſly religious, to ſhew more in others. That *Piety* which is ſo cold and benumb'd under the warm breath of the *publick Ordinances*; we may well preſume ſtark frozen, in our

our more retir'd offices: and if it thus faint and ſink in conſort, 'tis ſure more liable to the Wiſe Man's *Væ ſoli*, and utterly dies when we are alone. 'Tis true indeed, theſe *Cloſet tranſactions* are immediately viſible to none but the *ſearcher of hearts*, yet in true Devotion there is ſuch a *Symmetry* and proportion, that the Inferences we make by *analogie* may be very irrefragable: nay, 'tis to be fear'd many lie open to a yet clearer *conviction*, and may be proved to have few or none of thoſe private intercourſes with Heaven; for though a negative be not ſimply evincible, yet as in civil caſes we prove a Man not to have been at this time in ſuch a place, by his having actually been in another; ſo were the whole Week, Month, perhaps Year, of ſome Men exactly traced, we ſhould find them ſo engroſſed with other *diverſions*, that there will ſcarce be found any Minute for *devotion* to interpoſe: Mens worldly or fleſhly Concerns ſo divide their *time*, that God from whom 'tis all derived, can be afforded no tribute out of it. Yet alas, 'twere well if this privative ſort of impiety were all we had to anſwer for: but 'tis too apparent we do not only *neglect* God, but *reproach* and violate him: what elſe are thoſe bold and inſolent *blaſphemies* wherewith we daily aſſault him, making him the mark at which all our wild Paſſions are ſhot. Do we want any thing either for our *uſe* or *delight?* Preſently *God* is accuſed, his *Providence* or his *Goodneſs* queſtioned; and he declaim'd againſt either as impotent or illiberal. Does any body

body vex or diſquiet us? God muſt have his ſhare of our diſpleaſure, his ſacred Name muſt be profaned, and we count our fierceſt *Revilings* of Men, faint and inſignificant, if not inſpired with the moſt *dreadful* and *horrid Oaths*; Nay, he ſtands obnoxious to all the diſplacencies we receive even from inanimate creatures; if a *Die* or a *Card* run amiſs, our reſentments are preſently vented upon him; he is profaned and vilified, as if he were the *Cheat* that rookt us of our *money*, becauſe he does not ſecure us from thoſe loſſes, to which we wantonly expoſe our ſelves. Nor is it only our eager and warmer *paſſions* that thus invade him: Our pleaſanter *moods* do the very ſame, and we blaſpheme by way of divertiſement; every impertinent ſtory or inſipid *Jeſt*, muſt have the haut-gouſt of an Oath to *recommend* it, as every incredible Narration has to *atteſt* it: to ſay nothing of thoſe more ſolemn and deliberate *perjuries*, wherein we impiouſly ſuborn God's venerable and dreadful *name*, to be the Engine of our fraud and malice; and as if we thought he would forſwear as well as we, bring him to *countenance* thoſe Crimes he has vowed to *puniſh*. Thus do we with a prodigious impiety contaminate even divinity it ſelf, make it the ſink for all our puddles to run into; and proſtitute that *name*, which as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks, is *great, wonderful and holy*, to all the unholy *purpoſes*, our Paſſions, our Intereſts, or our Phancies can ſuggeſt to us.

THIS

THIS *prophaneneſs* is ſo proper a foundation for *Atheiſm*, that we are not to wonder to ſee ſo many advance from the one to the other; they pay ſo little of the reverence due to God, that at laſt they turn their *impiety* into *argument*, and infer him not to be God, whom they treat ſo unlike one. And truly this ſeems to be the grand piece of *Logick*, which has diſputed many, not only out of *Chriſtian*, but all *native* Religion. How unhappily ſucceſsful it has proved among us, is too apparent in thoſe impious diſcourſes which are every where heard, wherein Men are arriv'd to ſuch a licentiouſneſs, that *David's Atheiſt* was a modeſt Puny, who only ſaid in his Heart, *There is no God*, and perhaps upon that account ſhall by ſome be adjudged to deſerve the Epithet the *Pſalmiſt* gives him, and be indeed thought a *fool*, that would not own what would now a-days ſo certainly denominate him a *Wit*, or in the ſolemn ſtile, a *Maſter of Reaſon*. And indeed they will atteſt the property of the ſtile, they rather *governing* Reaſon, than being *govern'd* by it; otherwiſe 'twould be hard to diſcern, how from different *premiſſes* the ſame *concluſion* ſhould be induced: and thoſe who in the late adverſe times denied God in revenge of their ſufferings, ſhould now pay their gratitude alſo in the ſame manner, and renounce him as (or more) loudly, ſince his ſignal a teſtation of that *righteous Cauſe*: his not owning whereof was then their *principal Plea*. The truth is, 'tis a little ſtrange how Atheiſm could admit ſuch enhanſing acceſſions as we find it has; for

for it being the completion and higheſt ſtep of ill, and that to which all others do but ſubordinately tend, one would think, it ſhould from its firſt appearance in the World, have been ſo mature and full grown a ſin, as could be capable of no improvement; but ſo ſubtilly wicked are theſe latter days, that we can never be brought to a *non ultra*, but ſtill find ſomething to add to the completeſt ſin: Therefore though of thoſe that are really Atheiſts, one cannot be ſaid to be more ſo than another, yet ſome may be more daringly, and miſchievouſly ſo; and ſure in that reſpect our *modern* ſurmount all *former*: They were generally on the defenſive part, took up the *tenet* as a *buckler* againſt the unwelcome invaſions and checks of Conſcience, and deſign'd nothing but the more *peaceable enjoyment* of their *luſts*; but *now* Men do not only uſe, but love it; make themſelves its avowed *Champions*, ſeek to win it *Proſelytes*; and in ſhort, appear ſo zealous for it, as if they made it their *religion* to have none. And God knows, too many ſuch reverſed kinds of *Evangeliſts* we now have, who with as great deſign unteach Divinity, as the firſt Propugners taught it; and their *number* and *boldneſs* have ſo encreas'd ſince the return of our *Peace*, that ſure the next Age will have little cauſe to think *Religion* had any ſhare in the *Reſtoration*. Thus have we done our parts to ſuperſede that obligation of ſerving God in holineſs, by leaving no God to ſerve; and after the moſt ſignal atteſtation of his Deity in our reſcue, *we* do like thoſe *ingrate perſons*,

*perſons*, who ſeek to ſubvert thoſe by whom themſelves were eſtabliſh'd, and *deny* him becauſe he has *own'd* us.

THIS is the *holineſs* wherewith we have ſerv'd him, ſince our being deliver'd from the hands of our Enemies, and our *righteouſneſs* has been very proportionable; for if we look into the dealings of all ranks of Men, we ſhall find the ſame vein of *deceit* run through all tranſactions. A few years ſince Sequeſtration and Plunderings, thoſe *whole ſale robberies*, had ſo over-topt the reſt, that like an *Epidemick diſeaſe* they had overwhelm'd, if not the *kind*, yet at leaſt the *notice* of all other Injuſtices: but ſince thoſe *Leviathans* are withdrawn, the *leſſer Devourers* ſupply their place; Fraud ſucceeds to Violence; and in all places, all occaſions of commerce, we ſtill meet with Sequeſtrators. The adulterated wares and falſe meaſures in *Shops*; the dilatory proceedings, and evaſive tricks in *Law*; the various and unworthy Cheats of *Creditors*, and the mean and diſhoneſt advantages which are watcht in all ſorts of *Contracts*, are too irrefragable proofs hereof. Nay, not only our Buſineſs, but our very *recreations* expoſe us to theſe deceits, as ſome of our bankrupted Gameſters can too ſadly witneſs; what troops of *Harpyes* attend thoſe ſports is every Man's obſervation: 'Tis ſtrange ſo many ſhould yet be to learn the prudence to avoid ſo known a danger, wherein a Man is at once made Active and Paſſive in the ſame Robbery, and does himſelf defraud his *family* of that, whereof

whereof he is defrauded by *another*. But amongſt theſe many injuſtices, there is none wherein Men ſeem generally to find ſuch a guſt and ſenſuality, as thoſe wherein God is concern'd; *Twenty* Laybooties humour them not ſo much as *one* from the Clergy; and if the Quakers ſhould be muſtered according to that one Tenet of not paying Tithes, we ſhould indeed find their numbers formidable. How ſubtle even the rudeſt perſons are in defaulking thoſe dues, we ſee by every days experiment, the over-reaching their Miniſter being the grand Triumph of a Ruſtick's wit; ſo that not only their covetouſneſs, but their vanity is concern'd in it: I know 'tis the uſual *Apologie* for this kind of Sacrilege, that either the *maintenance* of the Clergy is too much, or their *merit* too little; for the firſt, I think it may be demonſtrated, That there is no *liberal Science*, and but few *Mechanick Trades*, from which a Man may not hope as plentiful a *ſubſiſtence*, as this affords to the generality of its *profeſſors*: However I ſhall leave thoſe that make this objection to diſpute it with that authority, which has allotted them this proportion; deſiring them to conſider, that whatever the ſupport of the Clergy is, it coſts them nothing; no Man having purchaſt more, than what remains of the Eſtate, after his Tithe is paid. As to the ſecond, I confeſs 'tis extremely to be wiſht, that the *negligence* and *vice* of ſome did not give too much *pretence* to the Allegation; and to ſuch I cannot but apply the words of our *Saviour*, Matth. 18. 7. *Wo be to the*

*man*

*man by whom the offence cometh*; yet certainly 'tis very incompetent, to juſtifie the detention of their *legal rights*: for 'till the Law which has aſſign'd them, delegate the Forfeiture to me, the greateſt *enormities* of my Paſtor, cannot entitle *me* to any thing that is *his*: And indeed what blame ſoever is really due to *ſome*, we muſt expect it ſhould extend to *all*, if the Accuſers were to have the benefit of the mulct; and (as in the late confuſions) all Miniſters ſhould be made *ſcandalous*, in order to make them *poor*.

'TWERE eaſie to draw up a far larger Catalogue of thoſe *injuſtices* we daily commit; for as a Man has divers other concerns beſides his goods, ſo he may be injur'd in all thoſe: and truly the iniquity of theſe days, ſeems fully commenſurate to all the ſuffering capacities of mankind: we *weigh* our own and others Concerns in very *differing balances*, and *offer* thoſe Injuries without any regret, which we can with no patience *ſuffer*: How nicely jealous is every one of us of his *own* Repute, and yet how maliciouſly Prodigal of *other mens?* ſo that Defamation is become one of our main *Topicks* of diſcourſe, furniſhes entertainment to all companies; the *preſent* owe their Divertiſement to the *abſent*, and many would be drein'd quite dry, were it not for this reſerve, which like an unexhauſtible ſpring, ſtill ſupplies freſh matter of talk. In like manner how carefully do we avert any hurt or mutilation of our *own bodies*, and yet how barbarouſly inconſiderate are we of *others*, to whom we do the greateſt

greateſt out-rages, rather than uſe any violence to our paſſion, or reſtrain an angry Humour: only I confeſs there is one Inſtance, wherein though we are *unjuſt*, we are not ſo *partial*; but expoſe our ſelves alſo; and that is in the caſe of *Duels*: a barbarous cuſtom, wherein 'tis hard to define, whether the Wickedneſs or Folly be greater; yet it maintains its way in ſpite of all the methods God has us'd to make us better or wiſer: Of this there are two many, and too noted inſtances ſince our reſtoration, as if we were ſo enamour'd of *deſtruction*, that when we are prevented of it from our *Enemies*, we ſeek it from *one another*; or thought *publick Peace* ſo intolerable, that when 'tis caſt upon us (as ſure ours, if ever any may be ſaid to be) we are fain to take in private quarrels, as our reſcue from that dull quiet, and court the utmoſt *miſchiefs*, to avoid the oppreſſion of the greateſt *happineſs*. Thus perverſely do we countermine God's purpoſes of Kindneſs; and when he has ſecur'd us, ſolicitouſly ſeek to be deliver'd from our ſafety; project new *dangers*, and dare his power with a yet harder Task, the *delivering us from our ſelves*: and whilſt we thus avert our quiet, 'tis no wonder that we produce no better effects of it; nor fructifie under that, which we will not permit our ſelves to enjoy.

AND as upon this general view, we appear very ill managers of our Peace, ſo ſhall we much more, if we reflect on thoſe many particular bleſſings which are wrapt up in that of which we make ſo perverſe uſe, that we therein no leſs

violate *Sobriety*, than we have already appear'd to do *piety* and *righteouſneſs*; ſo filling up the meaſure of our iniquity, by tranſgreſſing all the fundamental rules of Chriſtianity, living neither *ſoberly, righteouſly, nor Godly, in this preſent world*, *Tit.* 2. 12. And of thoſe *advantages* which are the appendages to Peace, there are two moſt eminent; *Plenty* and *Liberty*, both of which are the more remarkable in our preſent quiet, by how much the deprivation of each was the greater. For the firſt, we know the *late times of rapine*, had torn from many among us their whole ſubſiſtence, ſo entirely deſpoil'd them, that they were reduc'd to *Job*'s condition, and connected the two extream points of Birth and Death, by a middle ſtate of the like nakedneſs and deſtitution: and to ſuch, our late *reſtoration* was a kind of Civil *reſurrection*; rais'd them like *Eliſha*'s dry bones, from the moſt hopeleſs ſtate, and by a ſucceſſive poſſeſſion of their own *Inheritances*, made them *heirs to themſelves*. And though all were not ſo wholly diveſted, yet like thoſe *Canaanites* whom the *Jews* did not extirpate, they were put under Tribute: and while perſons who knew ſo well how to exact, were *Lords Paramount*, a bare being was all could be expected; they ſeem'd rather Stewards than owners of their *fortunes*, and had rather the trouble, than advantage of their *Managery*: And who would not think that this ſo long want of plenty, ſhould have taught us ſobriety in the uſing it? That *deſuetude* ſhould have worn out the skill of *luxury*, and we ſhould not have known

known how to be riotous: but alas, our memories have been too faithful to us in this particular; no one of our vanities is fallen into oblivion, but on the contrary the art of Voluptuouſneſs ſo improved, as if all the time that was loſt from the *Practick*, had been ſpent in the *Theory*, and we had for ſo many years been contriving new kinds and degrees of exceſs. Indeed it is too ſure, we retain'd the *affection*, when we had loſt the *power* of rioting; and 'tis not our proſperity ſeduces us, but we it. For as the *Sun* though it lends its rays to the begetting of the vileſt *Inſects*, yet makes no ſuch production but upon apt Matter, *ſlime* and *putrefaction*; ſo neither would the moſt opulent fortune make us ſenſual, did it not find us diſpos'd and prepar'd for it. How forcible thoſe *propenſions* are, appears by the multitude of *objects* on which they work; For they had need be ſtrong inclinations that take in all Opportunities, nay, poſſibilities of actuating themſelves, and ſuch 'tis evident ours are, there being nothing capable of miniſtring to luxury, which we uſe not to that purpoſe. Our *Meat* is no longer apportioned to our Hunger but our Taſtes: ſo that the *Stomach* is made meerly paſſive in the matter of Eating; ſerves only to receive thoſe loads we charge it with, whilſt its Elections and Choices are foreſtall'd by the *palate* or *phancy*; nay, 'tis not permitted ſo much as a negative voice, not allowed to refuſe what is either for kind or quantity deſtructive to it: We do with ſtudied mixtures force our reluctting

appetites, and with all the Spells of *Epicuriſm*, conjure them up that we may have the pleaſure of laying them again. Thus unworthily *treacherous* are we to Nature, which while we pretend to *relieve*, we *oppreſs*, by giving her not only beyond her need, but ſufferance: And to ſhew we are no leſs dexterous in mixing *ſins* than *meats*; our very *Pride*, (though in it ſelf an intellectual vice) mingles with our *Gluttony*; every thing is inſipid that is not coſtly; and it is thought an ignoble Peaſant-like thing to eat a plain meal: Nor is he now to be lookt on as a Gentleman, whoſe ſingle Ordinary coſts not as much as would be (and himſelf would perhaps ſome years ſince have thought) a fair exhibition for ſome whole Families. And that we may not be charg'd with *partial intemperance*, we go not leſs in that of drink; wherein we are ſo nice and critical, that 'tis become a ſpecial skill and faculty to *judge of Liquors*: But how great ſoever our *curioſity* be 'tis ſure our *exceſs* is greater, and does not only over match but ſupplant it; there being no drink ſo unpleaſant which the love of a debauch will not reconcile us to. So great a malice do we bear to our *reaſon*, that to oppreſs it, we are content to oppoſe our darling, and do violence to our very *ſence*. How unhappily predominant this brutiſh Vice is, need not here be told, ſince it too evidently atteſts it ſelf to every Man's obſervation, it no longer ſeeking the ſhelter of night and darkneſs, but impatient of ſuch delay, appears in the broadeſt light; and he is now a

*ſlow-*

*ſlow paced drunkard*, that has not finiſh'd his *courſe*, perhaps begun another, before the *Sun* has ended his: Nay, ſo is the Scene chang'd, that *Sobriety* is become a reproachful thing; ſuch as even thoſe who value it dare not own, and are either driven to *preſerve* it by ſhifts and artifices, or elſe chuſe to *abandon* it rather than hazard the ſcandal. And certainly this is the great advantage this ſin has for the propagating it ſelf; for 'tis impoſſible *Beſtiality* ſhould be ſo univerſally agreeable to Mankind, that all ſhould purſue it out of *appetite* and likeing: 'Tis the Fear that engages many in it; and though it hath too many *voluntiers*, yet ſure 'tis this *preſs* that helps to make up its *numbers*; which as it ſpeaks the great baſeneſs of thoſe who are thus aſham'd both of Piety and Humanity, and had rather ceaſe to be *men* than appear to be Chriſtians; ſo is it a ſad indication of National impiety, a fatal Symptom that we have near fill'd up the meaſure of our iniquities, and are ripened for the woes denounced againſt thoſe who call *evil good*, and *good evil*, *Eſay* 5. 20. which ſure was never more palpably done than in this *inſtance*, wherein *temperance* is branded for *ill nature*, and dulneſs of humour; whilſt the moſt *ſwiniſh exceſs* muſt paſs for *ſociableneſs*, *friendſhip* and *hoſpitality*; names which have been ſo long proſtituted, that they have loſt their native uſe, and Men have forgot thoſe very diſtant things to which they originally belong'd: yet ſure ſuch once there were; God made us *ſociable creatures*, and we might ſtill continue ſo

upon the ſtrength of that firſt principle, and need not owe our *intercourſe* to our *debaucheries*; no, nor our friendſhips neither, which have been ſo far from being preſerv'd that way, that there is nothing more obviouſly, and frequently violates them; nay, indeed the whole ſpecies of *real* Friendſhip ſeems to be extinct, ſince this *fictious* ſort took place. Men think it enough (as indeed 'tis too much) to damn themſelves with their Friends, and all other communications are tranſmuted into that of Sin; for we daily ſee thoſe, who cleave the moſt inſeparably in this kind to each other, will yet neither do nor ſuffer any thing elſe: And ſure if this be *friendſhip*, 'tis ſuch a reverſt kind of it, as muſt have as preposterous a *Definition*; for none that have yet been given by *Divines* or *Philoſophers* will fit it. The like may be ſaid of *hoſpitality*, which ſure is in its proper nature of a very diſtant make from this; deſign'd to *relieve* Strangers, not burthen them: to cure their wants indeed, but not by the worſe exchange of a Surfeit: So that the *ancient* and the *modern* Hoſpitality, differ as much as that of *Melchizedeck*, from that of *Circe*: the one refreſhes, the other transforms: and how great a ſhew ſoever of liberality this later may have, yet he is not to be thought to have drunk *gratis*, that has paid his *reaſon* for his *ſhot*.

AND to both theſe parts of Intemperance, our Uncleanneſs bears full proportion; the one *makes proviſion for the fleſh*, and the other *fulfils the luſts thereof*. To how brutiſh an impudence this

this ſin is grown is too viſible: we need not trace Men into their privacies and receſſes, themſelves willingly proclaim their guilts; nay, dread nothing ſo much as the opinion of being innocent: yea ſo out-dated a *vertue* is Modeſty now become, that even that Sex to which it was once accounted the greateſt ornament, have put it off, look on it as a piece of *Ruſticity* and *country-breeding*: whether this pulling down the *fence* be an Indication they are willing to lie *common*, I ſhall not determine: but ſure that very free and confident behaviour now in uſe, is too apt to invite aſſaults, and takes off all that extenuation of crime, which was wont to be allowed that Sex, upon the ſuppoſition of their being ſeduc'd? Thus do we publiſh our Sin as *Sodom*, and if we conſider how much boldneſs it has gain'd ſince the return of our *proſperity*; 'twill be probable that ours alſo has been fomented by the *fulneſs of bread, and abundance of Idleneſs*, *Ez.* 16. 49. That our Plenty is very ſubſervient to it, appears by the *vaſt expence* wherewith many Men manage this vice: And that our Idleneſs is ſo too, is no leſs evident by the *large portions of time* that are ſpent in thoſe purſuits, it being, as the great deſign, ſo the eſpecial buſineſs of too many Mens lives. As for the *remedy* which God has aſſign'd, it ſerves now only to exaſperate the *diſeaſe*. Marriage with too many, only advances ſimple Fornication to Adultery, and ſuperadds Perjury to Uncleanneſs; thoſe ſacred bands are like *Samſon*'s Withs, broken upon every aſſault of

the *Philiſtines*, and the very thought of being confin'd, makes Men more apt to range: For alas 'tis, not their *needs* but their *Phancies* they are to provide for, and that is ſo endleſs, that the greateſt liberty of *Polygamy* would never ſatisfie it: The ſame quarrel would lie then to multiplied Wives, which does now to ſingle; I mean, that they were their own: And how numerous ſoever their *flock* were, 'twould not ſecure their poor neighbour's only *Lamb*; eſpecially when 'tis conſider'd, that in this they gratifie two ſins at once, their *vanity* as well as their *luſt*; their complacence in *undermining* the Husband, being generally as great, as that in enjoying the Wife. And if *Pride* abſtractedly and in its own nature be, as *Solomon* ſays, *an abomination to the Lord*, certainly when 'tis thus complicated, it muſt be infinitely more ſo, and aſcertain a concurrence of thoſe *Judgments*, which are ſingly threatned to each of thoſe *Sins*? what thoſe are I wiſh guilty perſons would ſeriouſly ponder, and then they would ſurely think their momentany pleaſures much over-bought. But alas, ſuch a faſcinating ſin this is, as allows Men no liberty of conſideration, they go on, as the *wiſe man* ſays. *Prov.* 7. 22. with the ſame ſtupidity that an *Ox goeth to the ſlaughter*: or, a *fool to the correction of the ſtocks*; and while every body elſe obſerves the effects of their Vice in their waſted *bodies* and ruin'd *eſtates*; themſelves are the laſt that diſcern it, purſue the *courſe* till the very laſt remains of ſtrength and wealth are exhauſted, and nothing left them but *diſeaſe* and *beggary*.

Of

Of the truth of this, there have been too many ſad examples, though it ſeems not yet enough to give caution to others.

AND to theſe *luſts of the fleſh*, we ſpare not to add thoſe of the *eye* alſo; for ſo ſurely we may properly call all thoſe *Luxuries* which adapt themſelves peculiarly to that Faculty; ſuch are the *gaiety* of Apparel, *richneſs* of Furniture, and all the *ſplendor* of Equipage which has no propriety to any other ſenſe, but that of ſeeing and is loſt if it be not lookt on: And though theſe ſeem to differ much from that *Covetouſneſs* which S. *John* is ſuppoſed to comprehend in that Phraſe, the one being the *tenacity*, the other the *profuſion* of Money; yet they are but ſeveral branches of the ſame Sin, and are diverſified only by a various application of the *Object*; for in ſtrict ſpeaking, he that covets Gold and Silver to lay on his *back*, is as properly *covetous*, as he that deſigns it only to fill his *coffers*. But beſides the propriety theſe *exceſſes* have to that title, they have no leſs claim to that enſuing, *The Pride of Life*; it being evident that they are both effects and fomenters of Pride: and ſure this ſets but an ill Character upon them, that when the *Apoſtle* has divided all the *luſts* of the world into *three ſorts*, theſe bid ſo fair to *two* of them. I would not here be underſtood to condemn that Decency and moderate Expence, which agrees to the ſeveral ranks and qualities of Perſons, there being not only a *lawfulneſs*, but ſome kind of *civil neceſſity* for ſuch Diſtinctions: nor is the levelling principle fitter to be admitted

in

in Habit, that in Title or Eſtate: That which I accuſe is quite another thing, it being that inordinate profuſion, which does not only exceed the ability and fortune of the Perſon, but the proportion of his rank and condition; and ſo confounds that diſtinction it ſhould preſerve, and levels us the wrong way: it being more tolerable that all ſhould be *Peaſants*, than all *Lords*. And this is the irregularity that many ſeem to affect, there being not only an emulation of pomp and bravery among equals, but thoſe of the moſt diſtant qualities, there ſeeming now no other *meaſure* than the utmoſt extent of their *money* or *credit*; the latter whereof is often ſo ſtretcht, that it not only cracks it ſelf, but by an unhappy contagion, breaks thoſe it deals with, and like a *Granado* tears towns in pieces: The many ruin'd Families of *Tradeſmen* do too ſadly atteſt this: would God our *Gallants* would conſider how unequal it is that many ſhould want *neceſſary cloathing*, only to maintain the *ſuperfluity* of theirs; an Inuſtice which not only upon a *religious*, but *politick* account deſerves the ſevereſt Reproof; and ſince *Divine* Laws will not reſtrain it, 'twere well if *Humane* were provided: Though I confeſs, 'twere not eaſie to find out penalties to deter thoſe, whom the wants ſo uſually attending theſe exceſſes will not diſcourage. This ſort of *vanity* was once thought peculiar to *women*; and though I cannot ſay that the ſexes have exchang'd faults, (becauſe each ſtill keeps its own, together with thoſe of the other) yet 'tis evident they have communicated

municated them; and as the *women* of this Age have tranſcrib'd *Maſculine* Vices, ſo the *men* have *Feminine*; this particularly wherein they ſeem fully to anſwer the Copy, they being as Critically knowing in all the myſteries of vanity, and as diligent in reducing their *Speculations* to *practice*, as any the moſt extravagant Female. Indeed both the one and the other purſue this *folly* with ſo great an expence of Care, Time, and Money, as if to be fine and happy were the ſame thing, and their *bodies* had been deſign'd for their Cloaths, rather than their *cloaths* for their Bodies.

AND now when all theſe luxuries are to be ſerv'd, it had need be an exorbitant plenty that ſhall ſupply them; and that will unfold the riddle ſo frequent among us, of ſo many being poorer ſince they recovered their eſtates, than when they wanted them: Our *revenue* how large ſoever, is ſo clogg'd and incumber'd with our *vices*, that they moulder away, and only ſerve to carry other Mens with them, by giving credit to run in debt. There are indeed no ſuch unmerciful *exactors* as our own Luſts; the one gleans after the other, till they induce ſuch a ſcarcity as the Prophet *Joel* deſcribes, 1.4. *That which the Palmer-worm hath left, hath the Locuſt eaten, and that which the Locuſt hath left, hath the Canker-worm eaten, and that which the Canker-worm hath left, hath the Caterpillar eaten*: So that in effect, we have only changed our oppreſſors, and are as much or more exhauſted by our own ſins, as we were before by other mens; with this woful circumſtance, that now we

we have the *guilts* as well as the *ſufferings*: Thus do we rob our ſelves, and create *want* in the midſt of all that *abundance* God has given us, uſing our plenty as the *Benjamites* did the *Levite*'s Concubine, *Judg.* 19. force and proſtitute it, till we deſtroy it; and the ſimilitude holds in this alſo, that what we thus violate is not our own; for let us fancy what we will, certainly our *ſuperfluities* are more the *poors* Right than *ours*, aſſign'd to them by God the grand Proprietor. So that our Exceſſes, have beſides their proper *guilt*, that of *injuſtice* ſuperadded; and when the cry of the *poor* ſhall be joyned to thoſe of our riots, they will certainly be too clamorous to let vengeance any longer ſleep.

THIS is the account we can give of our *plenty*, and that of our *liberty* is not much better; 'tis not long ſince that *arbitrary tyranny* expir'd, which gave us no other *meaſures* of our duties or puniſhments, than the *will* or *avarice* of the Impoſers: And then how did we gaſp to be under the conduct and protection of *known determinate Laws?* Yet now we have them, who conſiders them, or is regulated by them? Between the *licentiouſneſs* of Inferiors, and the *remiſneſs* of Superiors, they are rendred things only of *form*, not *uſe*; for while the one violates, and the other connives, what can they ſignifie? And though there be never ſo many *new* Laws made to aſſert the *old*, yet we ſee they ſerve for little but to partake of the ſame contempt with the others, and are but like the *Chimera*'s of an *Utopian State* ſagely

ly contriv'd, but to no purpoſe. 'Tis the execution of Laws that gives them a real and effective being, and without that, amidſt our great volumes we are yet deſtitute, and may too probably experiment the truth of that *Axiom*, that *'tis better to live where nothing is lawful, than where all things are.* Indeed if we remember how the Statutes of *Omri* were kept, with what a tameneſs the ſevereſt Impoſitions of the *late Uſurpers* were ſubmitted to, we have reaſon to think *coercion* is the ſureſt Principle of *vulgar obedience*; though withal it ſets but an ill mark upon us, who know ſo much better how to be *ſlaves* than *ſubjects.* And as we are reſtor'd to our *civil* Liberty, ſo as a branch or conſequent of that, we are to our *perſonal* alſo: We were lately in the condition Chriſt foretold to St. *Peter*, carried by others whither we would not, *Joh.* 21. 18. but now we gird our ſelves and go whether we will; and alas, what uſe do many of us make of this *freedom?* Is it not viſible, that neither our publick or private Affairs are the better attended; But on the contrary we are in a reſtleſs purſuit of impertinent, or vicious *paſtimes*, go pilgrimages to our *pleaſures*, wander about from this Sport, that Meeting to another, till many of us forget we have any other concerns in the world, and are as much ſtrangers to our own homes, as when we were forcibly detain'd thence: And for ſuch I know not whether the former reſtraint be not elegible, to be a *priſoner* being a kind of reſcue to him, that would otherwiſe be a *vagrant.*

THESE

THESE are the *uſes* we make of thoſe *advantages* whereof God has re-poſſeſt us. I know 'tis too envious a task to diſtribute theſe accuſations to every Rank and Order of Men among us; I have here given them in the lump, and wiſh that not only ſuch *degrees*, but each *perſon* would adapt to himſelf his *peculiar ſhare*, wherein contrary to other *dividends*, I fear the only Immodeſty and Injuſtice too will generally be, for every one not to carve liberally for himſelf. However, 'tis ſure in the groſs they make up the *Character* of a moſt barbarouſly *ungrateful Nation*. God was pleaſed to return our peace before we had forſaken our ſins, as if he meant to try our ingenuity; that we who had been ſo much worſe than Beaſts under the former method, that no ſtripes would diſcipline us, might have this advantage to redeem our credit, and be drawn with theſe cords of a man: but we have put off not only *piety* but *humanity*, and are equally untractable to all methods. And now who can refrain from *Moſes*'s *paſſionate Apoſtrophe*. *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh people and unwiſe! Deut.* 32. 6. Unwiſe indeed, that from the moſt benign *purpoſes* of God, extract nothing but our own *miſchief*: are the poorer for his Liberalities, and the worſe for his Goodneſs; by a prepoſterous uſe ſo wear out our Bleſſings that they ceaſe to be, at leaſt to be *Bleſſings*: And if they once fall from that, there is no middle form for them to aſſume; they convert into the direct contrary, and become the fatalleſt *Curſes*, more heavy than thoſe which were

were originally deſign'd as ſuch; that degeneration adding malignity, and no *Fury* being ſo extreme, as that which bottoms upon repell'd and *irritated love*. God's Mercies are like thoſe *Pictures* which according to the different poſition of the beholder, carry different Repreſentations; if we will ſtill ſtand on the wrong ſide, and not take them in their more *amiable* appearance, we ſhall find they can put on a *dreadful*: His Goodneſs will not be finally unoperative; if we will not permit it to lead us to *repentance*, 'twill drive us to *deſtruction*. I am ſure we have all reaſon to expect he ſhould exert his power as eminently againſt us, as he has done for us; unleſs perhaps he ſees that is not neceſſary to our ruine; for indeed let him but ſtand by and not interpoſe his omnipotence for us, he may truſt us to be his *Executioners*, our Vices having a *natural* as well as *moral* Efficacy to deſtroy us. And who knows whether that be not the reaſon of his ſeeming connivance that he forbears to ſtrike us, to give us up to thoſe more fatal wounds we inflict on our ſelves; this alas, we have too much cauſe to fear, for 'tis ſure, 'tis not our *innocence* that gives us Impunity, but 'tis more than probable 'tis our *incorrigibleneſs*; that God gives us over with a *why ſhould ye be ſmitten any more*? Will not proſtitute his Judgments; but as the baſeſt of *Malefactors*, leave us to the baſeſt of *Executioners*, and let our iniquities become our ruine. This as it is the ſevereſt purpoſe God can entertain towards us, ſo 'tis our moſt important concern to avert. And

O

O that we, who have ſo perverſely reſiſted all the deſigns of his *love*, would now try to defeat that of his *anger*, rob him of thoſe inteſtine avengers within our own breaſts, thoſe *fleſhly luſts which fight againſt the Soul*, 1 Pet. 2. 10. which do not only provoke, but execute his Wrath, and make us more miſerable than *Hell* it ſelf could do without them; and God knows 'tis more than time for us to ſeek an eſcape from ſo formidable miſchiefs: O let us not contract one minutes delay, let us caſt our ſelves at the feet of our offended God, and as thoſe who are condemn'd to diſgraceful Executions, uſe to petition for ſome death of leſs Infamy, as a *boon* and *favour*; ſo let us beg, that he will pleaſe to think us worth his *own correction*; that whatſoever we ſuffer from his hand, yet that we may not (like to *Herod*) be deliver'd up to the loathſom fortune of being devour'd by our own putrefaction. In a word, let us form *David's choice* into an importunate *prayer*, and earneſtly beg that we may *fall into the hands of God, and not into the hands of men*, at leaſt not of *our ſelves*, who are more to be dreaded than all our other *Enemies*.

INDEED till we do thus, our proſperities are far from real, and do in this juſtifie our moſt mutinous repinings, that we are never the better for them, nay, much the worſe; yet ſince 'tis only we that have enervated them, they will ſtand upon our account in their proper weight and value: When our *receipts* are ſummed up, God will charge us with them, not as thoſe empty *uſeleſs things*

*things* we have made them, but as thoſe great and *ſolid bleſſings* he intended them. And certainly this is moſt deplorable ill managery, to reſerve nothing to our ſelves but the *burthen* and *account* of our good things; to enjoy nothing, and yet be anſwerable for all. In ſecular things Men uſually pay with ſome regret for thoſe things, of which they have only anticipated the *uſe*: But with what diſmal reluctances ſhall we come to pay for Theſe, of which we have made no advantage? And muſt therefore pay the dearer becauſe we have not; it being not ſo much the things, as our employing of them to our benefit, whereof God will exact account. His *anger* is then only incens'd, when we reſiſt his *Love*: and his only quarrel to us is, for fruſtrating his deſign of making us happy. And ſure thoſe well deſerve his wrath, that will provoke it on ſuch terms; yet ſo perverſe is the *choice*, as of all ſinners in general, ſo eſpecially of *this Nation* at this time, who have all before us which might make us happy in both worlds, if we did not madly affect to be ſo in neither. God grant we may recover the Sobriety to make *wiſer elections*, before it be out of our power to make any, and we be found to ſtand to the miſchiefs of our own wild Option.

THE Reader will perhaps think I have gone beyond the limits of a moderate digreſſion; but the too great *copiouſneſs* of the Theme, muſt be my *excuſe*: ſuch over-grown Vices cannot well be drawn in little; and where there is ſuch a multitude, the moſt ſuperficial view of Each, is rather

proportional to a *diſtinct Tract*, than to the *few Pages* it has borrowed in this. My greater fear is, that the event may prove it impertinent, there being not much hope that a *private whiſper* ſhall be heard by thoſe, who are deaf to the *loudeſt calls* of Heaven, and have made no other *uſe* of thoſe various and ſignal Providences we have been under, than to defeat the *deſign* of them.

## CHAP. IX.

*A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Diſputes in general.*

THESE are ſome of thoſe many Artifices, whereby Satan like a cunning *pick-lock*, ſlily robs us of our grand *Treaſure*, the power and efficacy of our Chriſtianity, and leaves us only the empty *Casket*, the name and formal Profeſſion; that which ſerves only to make us *proud*, not *rich*; *Confident*, not *ſafe*: And God knows, ſo many are daily thus befool'd by him, ſo many fall as preys to theſe his *Stratagems*, as might, one would think, glut the eagereſt malice and ſuperſede all farther deſigns: but ſo inſatiate is this grand Devourer, that *retail prizes*, though never ſo frequent, do rather enrage than ſatisfie his *appetite*: He is Enemy not only to this or that man, but to *Mankind* in groſs, and therefore as if he fear'd that even his malice might not prove in-

defatigable

defatigable enough for ſo many diſtinct purſuits, he contrives more compendious methods of deſtruction; frames ſuch *Engines* as take off whole ranks, nay troops; compounds ſuch active *Poyſon*, as like a Peſtilence, kills multitudes at once. It is too trivial a Miſchief to annoy the *outward parts*, it is his Maſtery to ſpread an unſeen venome in the *Bowels*, thence to diffuſe it ſelf throughout, mix with the vital ſpirit, and convert that *kindly heat* which ſhould animate, into thoſe wild *irregular flames* which ravine and con ume. And this is done by that Peſtilential Spirit of *Diviſion*, that heat of *Diſputation*, which has for ſo many Ages poſſeſt and waſted the *Catholick Church*; and by an unhappy kind of Magick tranſform'd the zeal of Chriſtian *Practice* into an itch of unchriſtian *Diſpute*; made the *queſtions* about our *Creed* more numerous than the *Letters* of it; and by multitudes and contrariety of *Paraphraſes* ſo confounded and obſcur'd the *Text*, that what was antiently the badge and *teſſera* of Chriſtian Communion, ſerves us for no other purpoſe, but as an occaſion of breaking it.

SO long as the Church retain'd the *ſimplicity* of Chriſtian Doctrine, lookt on her *Faith* as the Foundation of her *Obedience*, and endeavour'd to propagate to her Children ſuch an underſtanding of the one, as was moſt apt to promote the other; She happily made good the Title *Chriſt* gives her, *Can. 6.* of his *Love*, his *Dove*, his *Undefiled* one; but when the *Serpent* had once got into this Paradiſe, infus'd his *Subtilties*, and nice intricacies

into mens brains; and leſt that ſhould not be ruinous enough, his *Venome* alſo into their Hearts: Then began all thoſe unhappy *Metamorphoſes*, in compariſon of which, thoſe of the Poets are as *trivial* as they are *fabulous*: Then that *Faith* which was once inſeparably joyn'd with the *patience* of the Saints, forſook that tame company, and linkt it ſelf with the moſt contrary qualities of *wrath* and *bitterneſs*; and thoſe whoſe Profeſſion it was to reſiſt unto Blood, ſtriving againſt ſin, *purſued* to Blood thoſe that reſiſted them in any of their Speculations: Then that paſſive valour which had rendred them ſo venerable to their Heathen Enemies, converted ſome, tired out others, and amaz'd all; ſadly degenerated into that active malice, which from *perſecuted Chriſtians*, entitled them to that monſtrous ſtile of *Chriſtian perſecutors*. And that *ardent love*, which had offered up ſo many Holocauſts to God, was ſupplanted by that *fiery hatred*, that made no leſs acceptable oblations to Satan.

THIS miſerable and deſtructive *change* was ſo much the intereſt of the Enemy of Souls, that we cannot wonder he ſhould ſo ſtudiouſly promote it; and indeed never did he at once ſo approve his *malice* and *ſubtilty*, I would I could not ſay ſucceſs alſo, as in this *deſign*; in compariſon whereof, all his other Projects ſpeak him but a Puny; this is his one *Goliah ſtratagem*, which has ſerv'd him not only to *defie*, but even *defeat the Armies of the living God*.

NOR is his Sagacity more obſervable in the *choice*,

*choice*, and main drift of the Deſign, than in the *ways* of effecting it; had he brought into the *Primitive* Church thoſe large ſcrolls of diſputable points, wherewith he has filled the Modern; that more charitable Age muſt needs have ſtartled and diſcern'd, that that *ſeeming Jealouſie* for Truth, was indeed nothing but a *real deſign* againſt Peace; and would ſurely never have parted with that ſacred *depoſitum*, that precious legacy ſo lately bequeath'd by Chriſt, for thoſe vain janglings, thoſe School ſubtilties which now entertain the World. But as he that would divert a Man from the *guard* of ſome important Treaſure, alarms him in ſome other of his greateſt *intereſts*; ſo he at firſt raiſes up *Hereſies* of the greateſt magnitude, whoſe blaſphemous conſequences ſo ſhook the whole Fabrick of Religion, that what was *Uzzah*'s Raſhneſs, ſeem'd then every Man's adviſed Duty, to *put his hand to the upholding of the tottering Ark*. How could thoſe who had been baptiz'd into the Faith of the bleſſed Trinity, ſuffer the *Arians* to rob them of the Second Perſon, the *Macedonians* of the Third, the *Valentinians* and *Manichees* ſo to deſpiſe the Firſt, as to ſet up againſt him a Rival Principle of being? How could thoſe who had ſo ſolemnly renounc'd the World, the Fleſh and the Devil, ſee them all bowed to by the temporizing, unclean, idolatrous *Gnoſticks*? Theſe were ſuch invaſions as ſeemed to commiſſionate all that could wield the ſword of the Spirit to take it up and engage in this Warfare. But all this while 'twas a ſad *Di-*

*lemma* to which the Church was driven; if ſhe gave countenance to theſe *ſeducers*, ſhe betrayed her *Faith*; if ſhe entred the *conteſt*, ſhe violated her *Unity*; the one would undermine her *foundation*, the other would make a breach in her *walls*.

AND the Devil was too old an Artiſt to loſe the *advantage*; he knew well, that even a juſt and neceſſary *defence* does, by giving men acquaintance with War, take off ſomewhat from the abhorrence of it, and inſenſibly diſpoſe them to farther *Hoſtilities*; and therefore he fail'd not to provide *ſparks* for that matter, which was now grown ſo combuſtible; nor did he always ſend them from the *bottomleſs pit*, but ſometimes borrowed fire from the *Altar* to conſume the Votaries, and by the mutual colliſion of well-meant *Zeal*, ſet even Orthodox Chriſtians in a *flame*. A memorable inſtance of this was the *diſpute about Eaſter*; wherein while the veneration they had of the glorious Reſurrection of *Chriſt*, prompted them to commemorate it in the exacteſt manner they could, the *Serpent* creeps into this Paradiſe, and though they had the ſame common end, yet on occaſion of ſome little diſſenting in the way, the heat of *Devotion* inſenſibly degenerated into that of *Contention*; and by being very tenacious of a circumſtance of that *celebration*, they loſt the more eſſential requiſite, that of *Charity*; kept the Feaſt indeed, but with the leven of malice, and abſurdly commemorate the redintegration of his *Natural* Body, by mutilating and dividing his *Myſtical*. So likewiſe in the buſineſs of Rebaptizati-

on,

on, while one ſide in a pious abhorrence of *Hereſie*, thought the ſtain like that of Original Sin, could not be done away by any Purgation leſs ſolemn than that of Baptiſm, and the other in a juſt reverence of ancient *cuſtom*, and jealouſie of *innovation* oppoſed it; the Diſpute laſted till the Scene was changed, and thoſe who deliberated of the manner of *receiving* Hereticks into the Church, were themſelves as ſuch *turn'd* out of it. No leſs well meant were the *Originals* of the *Novatian* and *Donatiſt* Hereſies, and as equally unhappy were their *iſſues*: For in them all, when bitter *Zeal* was once fermented, through its aptitude to receive, and the Devil's vigilance to adminiſter occaſions, the *Orthodoxy* or Hereſie of lives ſoon became terms out-dated, and men were meaſur'd only by *Opinions*: That *Sword of the Spirit* which was at firſt deſign'd againſt vicious practices, had its edge turn'd againſt *ſpeculative* notions; in ſo much, that at laſt like that of *Joab*, 2 *Sam.* 20. 8. It had got ſuch an aptneſs to fall out, that it was always a ready inſtrument of Execution, till even a Philoſophical Point, as that of the *Antipodes*, was reſolv'd with an *Anathema*; and to know the Syſtem of this *preſent* World, made forfeiture of that *to come*.

BUT alas, theſe, though great defections from Primitive Unity, were but modeſt Eſſays, and feeble aſſaults, compar'd with thoſe which infeſted the ſucceeding ages: *This root of bitterneſs* was then but a *probationer* in the ſoil, and though it ſent forth ſome off ſets to preſerve its

kind; yet *Satan* was fain to be at ſome pains to cheriſh and nurſe them up, placed them under the ſhadow of the *Sanctuary*, and got them like the treacherous Ivy, ſupported by that *Piety* they were deſigned to deſtroy; but it was not long e'er they had got firmer rooting and ſtrength, not only to propagate, but multiply. Every Diſpute in Religion grew *prolifical*, and in ventilating one queſtion, many new ones were ſtarted: And as *queſtions* grew numerous, ſo did *Sects* too; every Opinion almoſt conſtituted a new party, and thoſe again ſubdivided into many others; ſo that of all the firſt Violaters of Primitive Unity, we ſcarce find any, who did not revenge their *Schiſm* upon themſelves, by ſeparating from one another, as they had all done from the *Church*; till at laſt the progeny both of Sects and Opinions grew ſo numerous, that he who would exact an account, muſt be ſent like *Abraham*, to the Sky or to the Shore; the Stars or Sands being as apt a ſubject of *Arithmetick* as they. Whence it is brought to paſs, that *Satan* now may leave his toilſom labour of compaſſing the Earth; Men do his buſineſs for him, giving him leiſure to be only a Chearful *Spectator* of their *Divinity-Prizes*; the bloody combates of *Eccleſiaſtick Gladiators*.

AND that he may be ſecur'd never to want that pleaſing divertiſement, the *later Ages* have been careful to train him up *Combatants*, it being now become a diſtinct ſort of Learning, a new

Species

Species of Divinity, to raiſe nice *queſtions*, create new *difficulties*, branch out with fond *diſtinctions* our holy Faith, which the pious Simplicity of the firſt Chriſtians, receiv'd to practice; not to read upon us an *Anatomy*, unbowel and diſſect to try experiments, much leſs to bring into the *Theatre*, there made to fight and bleed, to ſhew men ſport, and try the skill of the unhappy ſword-men, the Maſters of Defence. *The form of ſound words*, which in its native frame and conſtitution was moſt enlivening and ſalubrious, diſſolv'd and melted by *Chymical preparation*, ceaſes to be nutritive; and after all the labours of the *Alembeck*, and hopes of an *Elixir*, inſenſibly evaporates, and vaniſhes to Air; or leaves in the recipient a foul *Empyreuma*, or fretting corroſive. An endleſs dotage about names and words, and then as endleſs a quarrel for them, appearing the commenſurate *effect* of the long ſtudies of thoſe *Diſtillers* in Divinity, who boaſt its Sublimation.

IT is indeed a thing worthy of the greateſt both wonder and lamentation, to ſee how the plaineſt, and moſt *ſimple propoſition*, when it falls into the hands of theſe *Artiſts*, is mangled and diſjoynted, is rarified, exalted and refin'd: He whoſe leiſure, or indeed whoſe life, would ſerve him to ſurvey all the ſubtle Diviſions and Diſtinctions of the *School men*, would ſure reſolve, they had the power of working *Miracles*: *Queſtions* in their hands multiplying in the breaking, like the *loaves* in our *Saviours*? But ſure the event of the Miracles

Miracles are very deſperate, no ſolid nouriſhment being deriv'd by the one, but on the contrary, Stones given us inſtead of Bread, and thoſe too for the worſt purpoſes, even to fling at one another, as if becauſe *ſtoning* was the death of the firſt *Chriſtian Martyr*, we deſign'd his *Charity* to the ſame fate with himſelf; *That Divine Goſpel Grace* having ſince fall'n under as thick a ſhowre, and with this ſharp aggravation too, that whereas he ſuffer'd from *Jews*, *Chriſtians* are become its *Executioners*: whileſt thoſe who pretend to be *Champions* of the Faith, Irrefragable, Angelical, and Seraphical *Doctors*, not only fill the Church with quarrels whileſt they live, but bequeath them in their writings to poſterity; as *Ziſca* is ſaid to have done his Skin, to be made an Incentive to War and Confuſion.

IT was the policy of *Julian* to ſhut up the Fountains of humane Learning from the Chriſtian Youth, leſt they ſhould there gain ſuch acuteneſs, as might render them the more formidable Adverſaries to *Paganiſm*: but could he have foreſeen that they would have employed thoſe Weapons not againſt the *common Enemy*, but *one another*, he would ſurely have revers'd the Stratagem, freely opened thoſe *Magazines* whence they might furniſh themſelves for their mutual ruine, and have as ſolicitouſly *promoted* their Learning, as ever he *obſtructed* it. I am very far from abetting their arrogant folly, who either decry humane Learning in general, or make it ſuch a *Moabite*, or *Ammonite*, that however it be admitted in *ci-*

*vil*

*vil Converſe*, muſt be interdicted the *Sanctuary*. Our Religion preſcribes us rational not brutiſh Sacrifices, and therefore deſpiſes not any of thoſe *advantages* which may improve our reaſon, exalt the *man*, and depreſs the *beaſt* in us: yet ſure we ſhall derogate very impiouſly from Chriſt's prophetick Office, if we allow not Divinity to be the Supreme and nobleſt Science; ſuch as is to be ſerv'd and attended, not regulated and govern'd by thoſe inferior: but that juſt order ſeems now to be inverted; *divine* learning is brought down to *humane*; the *Simplicity* of Chriſtian Doctrine ſo perplext and confounded with *Philoſophical Niceties*, that *Plato* and *Ariſtotle* are become the Umpires of our Religion, and we muſt go ask *Heathens* how far we ſhall be *Chriſtians*. Thoſe *deep things of God*, as the Apoſtle calls them, 1 *Cor.* 2. 10. and of which he pronounces the natural Man an incompetent Judge, are yet brought before *that Tribunal*, ſubjected to be ſcann'd by Rules of Art: but alas, our Line is too ſhort to ſound thoſe Depths. Men raſhly undertake to underſtand *incomprehenſible*, to order *infinite*, define *ineffable* things: and then no wonder if their conceptions differ; for where there is no viſible truth, wherein to Center, *Error* is as wide as mens *Fancies*, and may wander to Eternity: while multitudes run careers in the dark, it is not ſtrange to have them juſtle, and overthrow each other.

AND doubtleſs were the *Controverſies* which have ſo long haraſſed the Church throughly examin'd,

mind, many of them would be found of this nature. An *humble belief* has been judg'd too ſluggiſh and dull an exerciſe for men of acute parts, and therefore they would not take *Faith's word* that ſo it is, unleſs *reaſon* will be her *ſurety*, and ſhew them how; but ſure it had been much for the *peace* of the Church and *ſafety* of Souls, if Myſteries had been permitted to be *Myſteries*; that thoſe ſublimer parts of our *Faith* had been entertain'd with more veneration, and leſs of *diſquiſition*, and that while even the learnedſt do acknowledge them to be *Abyſſes*, they would not confute that Confeſſion, by attempting to *fathom* them. But alas, ſo prepoſterous has been the proceedure, that thoſe things which were indeed inexplicable, have been rackt and tortur'd to diſcover themſelves, while in the mean, the plainer, and more acceſſible *Truths*, as if deſpicable while eaſie, are clouded and obſcur'd; ſo many ſubtle *queries* rais'd about them, that the *Theorick* of Chriſtianity is become harder than the *Practick*; a Grace is much more readily acquir'd than defin'd, and that *key of knowledge* which ſhould give us entrance into the cloſets and receſſes of Religion, is by ſo much tampering and wrenching made *uſeleſs*; ſerves only to buſie us at the door, and ſo in effect proves rather a *bar to keep* us *out*, than a *key to let* us *in*. Thus perverſe are the *contradictions* of humane deprav'd nature; which like our *firſt Parents* take it unkindly, that God has reſerv'd any thing from us, and boldly attempt to break down

down his *encloſures*, to rob him of his *peculiar*; and yet in the mean time, as induſtriouſly contrive to rob our ſelves of our own, by cancelling both parts of God's diſtribution, neither leaving *ſecret things to the Lord our God*, nor *the revealed ones to us and our Children*, *Deut.* 29. 29. Certainly the firſt propagators of our Faith, proceeded at another rate; they well knew that not the *brain* but the *heart* was the proper *Soil* for that Celeſtial Plant, and therefore did not amuſe their *Proſelytes* with curious queſtions, but ſet them to the active part of their Religion. We ſee what brief and plain Inſtructions S. *Peter* gives his *Catechumeni*, Acts 2. 38. *Repent and be baptiz'd every one of you for the remiſſion of ſins*: And this it ſeems as a full Preparation for the gift of the Holy Ghoſt, which he there promiſes upon theſe only conditions. This was that vigorous Seed which at once *ſprung up* ſuddenly, and *rooted deep* too, and produc'd the liberal harveſt of that day: but ſure had thoſe three thouſand Souls been Catechized by our modern *Caſuiſts*, we had ſeen a wide difference, not only in the expedition but ſucceſs. In like manner we ſee *Acts* 8. how ſhort a Creed qualified in S. *Philip*'s judgment for the Eunuch's baptiſm: and we find S. *Paul*, whoſe education enabled him for the ſubtileſt definitions, yet delivers his whole Doctrine in this *compendium*, Acts 20. 21. *Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; and 'tis obſervable how he introduces this with a profeſſion that *he had kept back nothing*

*nothing that was profitable for them,* Verſe 20. and ſeconds it, Verſe 27. with another, *That he had not ſhunned to declare unto them the whole counſel of God*; from whence 'tis obvious for the ſhalloweſt diſcourſer to infer, that the whole counſel of God as far as it is incumbent for Man to know, at leaſt *neceſſitate medii*, is compriz'd in that one breviate of Evangelical Truth: and certainly whilſt all the diviſion of theſe generals, was the diſtributing them into *practice*, they were found moſt fertile ſeminaries of all Vertue; but when they came to be *dichotomiz'd*, and canton'd out into curious aerial notions, they loſt their *prolifick* nature: that fruitful Land became a Wilderneſs, a wild and intricate Maze, where Men ſooner loſe *themſelves*, than find either *Truth* or *Holineſs*.

WHEN Chriſtianity firſt atteſted it ſelf by *miracles*, it produced in the hearts of its converts, a firm aſſent to the truth of the *Doctrine*, and an awful reverence and adoration of *that God*, who had given ſuch power unto Men, awaking them to an Enquiry after *duty*, ſo to propitiate that *Omnipotence* whoſe fury it appear'd impoſſible to bear: And this ſure was a much more *genuine effect*, than if they had buſied themſelves in thoſe many *unprofitable curioſities*, nice, yet bold enquiries into the Divine Attributes which now a-days ſerve only to ſupplant that pious veneration we owe to them.

IN like manner the comprehenſive enunciation of *Chriſt*, *Mar.* 16. 16. *He that believeth*

*ſhall*

*ſhall be ſaved, and he that believeth not ſhall be damn'd*, was received by the firſt Chriſtians, as the condition on which the two ſo diſtant ſtates of Salvation or Damnation depended, and accordingly excited their diligence, to attain the *one*, and avoid the *other*. And this certainly was a much more concerning employment, than to have entertained themſelves with the modern diſpute, whether ſome antecedent decree of God had not irreverſibly determin'd them to the one or other; a *diſquiſition* that has ſerv'd only to keep us *idly buſie*, ſet our heads a working, but folds up our *hands* like *Solomon*'s ſluggard in our boſoms. So alſo when S. *Paul* affirms it the deſign of *Chriſt's giving himſelf for us, to purifie to himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works*; the *Primitive* Chriſtians had no other deſign than to comport with that his purpoſe; to be what He died to make them, and to atteſt their *Zeal* to good works, by being actually rich in them. They took *Chriſt*'s word, *That he that gave the meaneſt dole for his ſake, ſhould not loſe his reward*; thought themſelves ſure enough upon his promiſe, and never diſputed the proportion either of Worth or Congruity between the work and wages; and had the *Modern* done the like, our *works* had not ſo unhappily evaporated into *words*; we had talkt leſs and done more.

'TWERE eaſie to draw the Parallel through all the points which buſied the devotion of the *firſt* Ages, and the curioſity of the *latter*: By all which it would be evident, how much Chriſtian

ſtian Doctrine has *loſt* in its Efficacy, ſince it *gain'd* in its Bulk; how we have embaſed our *Coin* by multiplying it; and have divided our *ſum* into ſo many, and ſo ſmall Fractions, as our *Arithmetick* can ſcarce *number*, never *unite*. We ſhould think him very ridiculous, that ſhould hope to advance his *crop*, by grinding the *Corn* he ſows; yet, methinks, this has been the Method of our Spiritual Husbandmen, who have ſcarce ſuffered one grain of our Faith to eſcape Entire. 'Tis ſaid that the *Ant*, when ſhe lays in her winter ſtock, bites the ends of the *Corn*, as being *Naturaliſt* enough to know that will certainly prevent its ſprouting. And ſure that little contemptible Creature whom *Solomon* appoints to preach *induſtry* to the *ſluggard*, may in this point read *Philoſophy* too, to our greateſt *Doctors*; convince them that that Seed which they mangle with ſo many Diſtinctions and Diviſions, will never ſpring up into Chriſtian *Practice*: It will rather be like the *Dragons* teeth, *Cadmus* is ſaid to have ſown, whoſe immediate production was a *hoſtile band* combating one another. A *Fable*, which, God knows, we have found too ſadly *moraliz'd* in our School-contentions, only with this unhappy difference, that ours are more *immortal*; our *Serpentine* breed fight but never die, oppoſe but deſtroy not one another.

AND then 'twill not appear ſtrange to ſee the firſt ſeeds of diſcord ſo prodigiouſly encreas'd, that they now over-ſpread the face of the Earth: for, whereas in all other things there is

is a ſucceſſion, one Generation goes and another comes, and ſo though the *ſpecies* continue, the *Individuals* periſh; theſe ſeem to have the accurſt privilege of propagating and not expiring; and to have reconcil'd the procreativeneſs of *corporeal*, with the duration of *incorporeal* Subſtances: This is ſuch an advantage towards their *multiplication*, that we may grieve, but cannot wonder to find them ſwarm; not like *Bees* to bring profit, but like *Locuſts*, do devour every green thing in the land; nor is it now in the power of all the *Magicians* of *Ægypt* to caſt them out: for were it poſſible ever to become *Satan*'s intereſt to ſuppreſs them, he would certainly find himſelf in the caſe of one of his young Conjurers, to have rais'd more Spirits than he could lay. Mens now *irritated Paſſions*, and formed Intereſts, the great fomenters of diſputes would prove too *ſturdy Devils*, even for *Beelzebub* himſelf to Exorciſe.

BUT 'tis too ſure his Kingdom will never ſo divide againſt it ſelf; it ſuits not only with his *Nature*, but with his *Ends* to perpetuate our Strifes, and therefore as if our doctrinal debates were not enough to ſecure his purpoſe, he has an auxiliary troop of ritual differences to attack us. The *Leproſie* which infeſts the ſolider parts of our Religion, has paſt from the *Body* to the very *Garments*; the moſt exterior *adherencies*, Habits, Geſtures, Days, every thing that has but the remoteſt ſubſerviency to Piety, are become the *objects* of fierce Conteſts, and have ſo

encreas'd the number and heat of our quarrels, that 'tis unneceſſary, perhaps impoſſible to add more; if he can but keep up theſe, as, God knows, he is too like to do, his Kingdom will be competently guarded, they being his greateſt *ſecurity* againſt that *power of Godlineſs*, that vital force of Chriſtianity, he ſo much dreads: that they are ſo is obvious enough to him that takes but the groſſeſt confus'd view of them. But that we may better diſcern the degrees of his *advantage* and our own *miſchief*, 'twill not be amiſs to conſider them more attentively, make ſome diſtinct obſervations, not of *all*, for that were endleſs, but of *ſome* of their moſt eminent *Effects*, which we ſhall find ſo pernicious and deſtructive, as ſufficiently ſpeak their relation, and ſubſerviency to the great *Abaddon*.

AND in the firſt place, if we conſider them only *privatively*, as they ſupplant and juſtle out our greater concerns, we ſhall find them ſadly miſchievous, indeed to ſuch a degree, that were they not chargeable with any *poſitive* ill, they were by this their meer negative Force, competent Inſtruments of our *Ruine*. Did they actually convey their venom, yet while they ſubſtract our Nouriſhment, their effects will be ſure to be deadly; *Grace* as well as *Nature* being liable to be ſtarv'd as well as poyſoned. *Chriſtianity* is not a dull unactive, but ſtirring buſie State, and therefore we ſtill find it in the *Goſpel* repreſented under the *Metaphors* which imply the greateſt Induſtry and Activity; 'tis a *trade*, a *watch*,

*watch*, a *race*, a *combate*, and it aſſigns us tasks enough to juſtifie the propriety of the *Tropes*: And therefore as on the one hand, the ſleepy Profeſſor will at laſt find he has but dreamt of thoſe glorious Rewards he expects; ſo on the other, he that frames himſelf another *Scheme* that labours, but not in God's Vineyard, that buſies himſelf in things extrinſick to that one great *Sphere of motion*, the Evangelical Precepts, will finally diſcern that he has but rolled *Syſiphus* his ſtone, eſpous'd a *toil* under which he may indeed be *weary* and heavy *laden*, but will never find *reſt* to his Soul.

AND then what can be more perfectly adapted to his aim, who deſires to propagate his own eternal reſtleſneſs unto us, than thus to commute our tasks, exchange theſe *pleaſant and gainful ones*, which God aſſigns us, for thoſe *uneaſie* and *fruitleſs*, we impoſe on our ſelves? 'Tis true, we find too many of thoſe unprofitable works of darkneſs to buſie and employ us: but I think no one, nay, I am apt to ſay not all others together have proved ſo effectual to his purpoſe as this of raiſing and maintaining *parties in Religion*. 'Tis too uſual a policy of States to ſecure themſelves from the *fear* of a potent Neighbour, by fomenting a civil *diſcord* in his Kingdom: *Satan* has in this inſtance found a lucky Stratagem, it having proved the moſt powerful revulſive of his danger. I will not examine, whether he borrowed it from, or lent it to our *Machiavilians*, but ſure he may from his

own experience recommend it with the atteſtation of a *Probatum eſt.*

INDEED this art of diverſion gives him a full ſecurity, againſt all the fears in our Chriſtianity, for 'tis not the title he envies to us, or dreads himſelf; we know he long ſince had courage to contemn the name even of Chriſt, when invoked by thoſe whoſe practices joyn'd with him in defying it; while we are but *Jewiſh Exorciſts*, make no other uſe of Chriſt, but to get us a reputation and a trade, he can deal well enough with us. *Seven Sons of Sceva* are not half ſo terrible to him as *one* S. *Paul*; 'tis him only he fears, that to the *form* has joyn'd *the power of Godlineſs*, That *Exorciſm* he knows he cannot reſiſt, and therefore has very dexterouſly found a way to divert it, by engaging us in thoſe contentions which allow us not to think of the practical part of our profeſſion: By the *confus'd noiſe* of Battel, quite drowning that *voice behind us*, which ſays, *This is the way, walk in it.* Nay, by this ſubtlety he does not only divert, but foreſtal alſo; like the *Philiſtines*, allows no Spear or Sword that may be us'd *againſt him*, but takes up all thoſe Inſtruments by which we ſhould work the *work of God.* We know to all affairs of Importance there are three neceſſary *concurrents*, without which they can never be diſpatcht; *Time*, *Induſtry*, and *Faculties*: and the more weighty and difficult the Buſineſs is, the greater Degree of each of theſe is requiſite. Now certainly the *intereſt* of our Souls is not the ſlighteſt *concern* we have: the avoiding eter-

eternal *miſery*, the acquiring endleſs *bliſs* is not ſo trivial, or ſo eaſie a matter as to be the Work of a *moment*, the purchaſe of ſome few *yawning wiſhes*, or *volatile phancies*: He who is to diſpenſe the Rewards, has propos'd us other Conditions, aſſign'd us Work which takes up no leſs *time* than that of our *whole lives*; no leſs *intention* than of our *whole powers*: And then if we ſuffer any thing elſe to interpoſe, and defaulk what is thus entirely requiſite; if we cut new *Channels* for that which ſhould run in this *one full current*, 'tis eaſie to divine what the event will be: For Man being finite both in his nature and operations, the time and attention he beſtows on one thing, muſt neceſſarily be ſubtracted from another: And therefore if our Diſputes about Religion entertain and buſie us, they muſt unavoidably interrupt our attendance on practick Duties; and ſo whilſt we quarrel with *one another*, give our great *Maſter* too juſt ground of quarrel with *us all*, by neglecting the great, and indeed only Buſineſs entruſted to us.

NOW indeed that our contentions do thus divert us, is too apparent to any that ſhall conſider it in any of the three forementioned particulars; for, firſt for our *time*, they do not only inſenſibly ſteal away much of it (a modeſty which moſt other diverſions do ſtill retain) but *Magiſterially* exact it, and accordingly have large parcels of it ſolemnly and avowedly devoted to them; the *ſcanning old queſtions* and *raiſing new ones*, having been the profeſt Buſineſs of many Men's lives;

their very Vocation and Trade wherein they have arrived to ſuch *eminence*, as ſhews they made *liberal oblations* of their Time to it: And of this every age has left ſo many Records, as the mere reading them would allow few vacant minutes to the ſucceeding: And had not time a little reveng'd his own quarrel, and conſum'd many of thoſe *Writings*, by which himſelf was waſted, the *Hyperbole* would not be very extravagant in this caſe, which we find warrantably us'd in another, *John* 21. that even *the world it ſelf could not contain the Books which have been written.* As it is, there are more than enough to employ, nay, devour time; for when Men once launch into the vaſt *Sea* of Controverſie, they are toſſed there endleſly, and ſeldom recover a *harbour*, Difficulties like *waves* crouding one upon the neck of another; And accordingly we ſee in *Polemick Diſputes*, how every rejoynder ſwells bigger and bigger, till like the Prophet's *cloud*, from a *hand breadth* it over-ſpread the *Heavens*; every little Manual becomes the Parent of vaſt Volumes; and unleſs the evil cure it ſelf by majoration; unleſs the greatneſs of the task bring in deſpair to ſupplant curioſity, and keep Men from reading, the *ſpectators* will have as little reſpit as the *Combatants*; both Writers and Readers will be ſo engroſt, that they will have little leiſure for any thing elſe. And I dare in this appeal to any that have engag'd deep either way, whether they have not found it experimentally true: I wiſh they would but ſnatch ſome broken parcel as a plank from the common *ſhip-*

*wrack*

*wrack* of their time; a reſcue, a few minutes for a ſober reflection, and audit what real profit accrues to them from the expence of ſo many precious Hours; how much it advances that grand buſineſs for which their Time *here* was allotted, and according to which their Eternity *hereafter* will be awarded: always remembring, that if it promote it not, it hinders it, by diverting that *time* which ſhould have *been* ſo employed: And indeed there cannot be a more comprehenſive *miſchief* than this of the *loſs of Time*, it being that which virtually contains the fruſtrating of all other Advantages, whereby we ſhould work out our Salvation. The operations even of *Chriſt* himſelf were, he tells us, limited to a certain ſeaſon: *I muſt work the work of my Father, whilſt it is day, the night cometh when no man can work*; and if the Night overtake us, it matters not how we are ſtored with inſtruments of Action, ſince they all at once then become uſeleſs. Our Laws anciently ſet a greater *penalty* upon the ſtealing *Beaſts of breed*, than on other Cattel of the ſame *ſpecies*, as calculating the damage by the poſſibilities of which the owner was robb'd. Time is the *univerſal womb* of things and actions; and therefore when we loſe that, we ſuffer an accumulative prejudice, forfeit our *Rights in reverſion*, as well as our *Poſſeſſions*, our *capacities*, as well as *enjoyments*. As in an Abortion the unhappy Mother, beſides the fruſtration of her hopes, and child-birth pains ſuſtain'd, acquires an aptitude to miſcarry for the future, and never to be able to

bring forth a vital birth: And thus, God knows, multitudes of *Embryon* purpoſes periſh, and the miſery of it is, they are our beſt that do ſo. We generally purſue our *frivolous projects* with an *active vigour*, but keep our great and concerning *affairs* only in deſign till *death* come and ſurprize us, which like the *fatal Metamorphoſes* the Poets talk of, fixes us in the poſture it finds us, and ſo preſents us to *Judgment*. Now I would know of the moſt eager Contender, whether he would not chuſe then to be found with his hands ſtretcht out in Prayer to God, or *alms* to the poor, rather than dealing *blows* amongſt his fellow-ſervants; if he would, certainly 'tis his concern to put himſelf into that form he would then appear in, to huſband his little ſpan of time ſo, as may ſtand him in ſtead when time ſhall be no more.

BUT if Men will needs be *improvident*, yet why will they be *ridiculous* too? If they will barter away their time, methinks they ſhould at leaſt have ſome eaſe in exchange: but to be induſtrious ill husbands, to loſe all their *advantages*, and none of their *toil*, is ſuch a ſolemn piece of folly, as is at once matter of Scorn and Wonder; yet this is the very caſe here; our *wranglings* do not only exhauſt our *time* but our *ſtrength* too: We purſue them with ſo vehement an intention, as if our Faith propos'd not to us any other victory, but over this ſort of Opponents: We run our ſelves breathleſs in this *Race*, where the *Prize* is only a few *fading leaves*, or what is more tranſitory, a little *popular applauſe*; and make not towards

wards the incorruptible Crown, till we are grown too feeble and decrepit for the other purſuit. Men macerate their Bodies and waſte their Spirits in *Polemick Studies*, preſcribe themſelves no time of diſcharge from that *War*, till they are able no longer to weild their *weapons*, and then, when mere impotence makes them *peaceable*, begin to cry out of *contention*, ſnatch up *Devotion*, when Controverſie begins to be too heavy for them, and at their Death *pray for that peace* of the Church, which they have made it the buſineſs of their life to *diſturb*. This as it ſufficiently atteſts what Men's thoughts are in their cool blood, what apprehenſions they have of the way when they draw near their journey's end; ſo does it abundantly evince the unſpeakable prejudice Piety receives from our Diſputes; Thoſe have the active and vigorous *Abettors*, while that is turn'd off to languiſhing *bed-rid Votaries*. So that the *diviſion* between theſe two, is like that of the *Cattle* between *Jacob* and *Laban*, all the ſtronger to the one, and feebler to the other: Would God the ſcene were not in one reſpect chang'd, and that the *Syrian* had not here got the better ſhare. But in the mean time what greater advantage can *Satan* wiſh for, our ſtrength and induſtry is diverted upon theſe foreign expeditions, and *Sion* is left to be guarded by the lame and the blind, ſuch only as are not able to follow the Camp, and then 'tis not ſtrange to ſee what ſucceſsful aſſaults he has made, that that true *practick Vertue* which once made ſuch victorious ſalleys on the Heathen World,

World, is now baffled in its own Quarters, beaten from its Works, and driven to ſeek ſhelter in obſcure corners, immures it ſelf in ſome few private breaſts, and ſo like an exil'd Prince, makes only ſhift to *live*, when it ſhould *reign*, But alas, ſhall we for ever ſuffer our ſelves to be thus befool'd, ſhall this his ſtale Stratagem after ſo many hundred years uſe, nay, and detection too, loſe nothing of its Efficacy? Muſt we always waſte our ſtrength in forging ſhackles for our ſelves? This is ſuch an infatuation as *Hoſea* ſpeaks of, *Chap. 9. 7. The Prophet is a fool, the Spiritual man is mad*: Would God, we would once put our ſelves under the diſcipline of ſerious recollection, it might perhaps cure the Phrenſie: Let him who has with unwearied diligence watch'd all advantage againſt his *Antagoniſt*; rack'd and tortur'd every period of his diſcourſe, to make it confeſs an abſurdity: Let him, I ſay, conſider how much better that *Induſtry* had been employ'd in diſcovering the *fallacies* of our common Adverſary, that old Sophiſter, who puts the moſt *abuſive Elenchs* on us, whileſt we are moſt buſie in putting them upon one another. Good God! how might true vital Chriſtianity at this day have flouriſh'd, if we would have beſtowed our pains the right way? At how much a cheaper rate might we have *cheriſht*, than we *deſtroy* her? All parties pretend to be very careful of this *Vine*, are very buſie in ſetting traps for the *little Foxes*, all whom they are pleaſed to call *Hereticks*; and in the mean time take no care of the *wild Boar*, let

that

that not only ſpoil *her branches*, but ſtock up her *roots*, ſuffer the moſt ſavage beſtial Vices to deſtroy both Power and form of Godlineſs together. Thus unhappily do we divert our intentions from our moſt important concerns. And as *Archimedes* is ſaid to have been ſo vehemently intent upon a *Geometrical figure*, that he heard not of the taking the City, till an *Enemy* gave him his *information* and *death* together: So do we ſo buſie our ſelves in drawing our ſeveral *Schemes* of Religion (every of which will pretend to no leſs than *Demonſtration*) that in the mean time, that which alone is *true Religion*, is expos'd to the fury of the Enemy, ſack'd, ruinated, and like the plough'd up *Jewiſh Sanctuary*, not one ſtone left upon another. Certainly moſt of the *Queſtions* which at this day diſturb *Chriſtendom*, have, *in reſpect of their matter*, no propriety toward the propagating *good Life*, but, *in reference to their way of managery*, all aptneſs to hinder it; how much were it then for our *eaſe* as well as *profit*, to turn us into the plain road, where none of theſe Thorny difficulties will encumber us? Alas, why ſhould the *Romaniſt* ſo ſweat to maintain his *Purgatory flame*, as if he already felt its heat, and would in this World antedate thoſe pains, when the ſame Induſtry beſtowed here to *purifie himſelf from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit*, would ſubtract the matter of that *Fire*, and leave little for that *furnace* to refine; which were doubtleſs a much ſecurer way, even according to his *own principles*, than to truſt to the uncertain devotion of *others*, to fetch him out

out when once deeply ingulph'd: 'tis ſurely much better to ſtarve their Fire by ones own *innocence*, than to leave it to be extinguiſh'd by the Tears and Piety of *ſurviving friends*. Why ſhould the *Socinian* ſo eagerly contend for the poſſibility of keeping the Law, when *one example* would convince more than a *thouſand arguments*. Let him bend his ſtudy to make himſelf an inſtance of his own doctrine; and then though he do finally fail in proving his *Hypotheſis*, yet if he do his utmoſt, he will not fail of a better *triumph* than that which the Schools can give: and ſo will even from his error extract advantage, his very *ſtraying* will by a happy *Antiperiſtaſis*, lead him into the *way*. Why does the *Predeſtinarian* ſo adventurouſly climb into Heaven, to ranſack the celeſtial *Archives*, read God's *hidden Decrees*, when with leſs labour he may ſecure an *Authentick tranſcript* within himſelf; let him according to Saint *Peter*'s advice, *Add to his faith vertue, and to vertue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance*, &c. and that chain of vertues will ſtand him in much more ſtead, than if he could as infallibly (as ſome have confidently) demonſtrate every link of *Predeſtination*: 'Tis the aſſiduous *practice* of Duty will make his calling and election ſure; and unleſs he can confute that divine *Axiom*, that *without holineſs none ſhall ſee the Lord*; he cannot but confeſs he may more profitably buſie his thoughts in labouring to become holy, than in diſputing whether he can chuſe to be ſo or not. Or laſtly, why do we *Chriſtians of ſeveral perſuaſions*,

*ſions*, ſo fiercely argue againſt the *ſalvability* of each other, as if it were not only our Opinion, but our Intereſt and our Wiſh, *that all ſhould be damn'd but thoſe of our particular Sect*; when God knows, not only every Society, but every ſingle perſon has enough to do to *work out his own ſalvation*, which if we will take the *Apoſtle*'s word, is to be done *with fear and trembling*, *Phil.* 2. 12. A temper very widely diſtant from that of cenſuring and judging. And ſure we ſhould not think that *malefactor* more meriting, or more likely to be acquitted, who ſhould leap from the *Bar* to the *Bench*, and there condemn the whole Gaol but himſelf. 'Twas a ſober and Chriſtian *reply* of a late learned Gentleman, who being ask'd by one whether a *Papiſt* might be ſaved, anſwered, *You may be ſaved without knowing that*. And would we confine our cares and enquiries to thoſe things which concern that one great Intereſt, we might take *leſs pains*, and yet do *more work*: be leſs *buſie bodies*, but more *fruitful Chriſtians*, and then ſure 'tis time we ask our ſelves the *wiſe man*'s queſtion, *Eccleſ.* 5. 16. *What profit hath he that laboureth for the wind*? And at laſt give over this unthriving diligence, and not ſo emulate the moſt ſtupid of Beaſts, as to make our ſelves burthens, only that we may couch under them.

AND were this only *Iſſachar*'s lot, 'twere the leſs to be regretted, but alſo *Zabulon* herein invades his portion; 'tis they that handle the *Pen of the Writer*, that have engroſt *this error*, and will not ſuffer it to be a *Plebeian* one. None do

ſo

ſo much this way miſemploy the two vulgar talents of Time and Induſtry, as thoſe who have a third ſuperadded to them, that of Extraordinary Faculties and Endowments, which they do as prodigally laviſh as either of the former. The Beginners or Abettors of *contentions* have generally been Perſons of the moſt *acute refin'd wits* and *excellent learning*, which has enabled them for thoſe quirks and ſubtilties, of which groſſer underſtandings would have remain'd more happily ignorant. A ſtrange production, that the greateſt *beauties* of Nature and Art, ſhould ingender the *fouleſt deformity* in Religion. Thus alas, have *Satan*'s Altars the pre-emption of God's, the fatteſt Oblation brought to feed the fire of *contention*, whilſt that of *devotion* expires for want of Nouriſhment. It was indeed no wonder, that the blind zeal of *Pagans* had made him ſo wantonly nice, that none but the choiceſt Victims would ſerve his turn, none but an *Andromeda* and an *Iphigenia*, Royal and Virgin Sacrifices propitiate his infernal Deities: but that among Chriſtians he ſhould ſtill have the ſame *Election*, have the richeſt Treaſures of thoſe, who ſay they war againſt him, laid at his feet, have his choiceſt weapons out of his Enemies magazine, is a riddle that can ſcarce be ſolved, but by concluding *Idolatry* has only chang'd its *form*, and that he ſits as ſecurely enſhrin'd in *mens paſſions* and animoſities, as ever he did in an *Idol Temple*; ſo that he ſeems rather to have loſt the *pomp*, than the *power* of Regiment. But admit that he were not here

ſo immediately God's Rival, that theſe *ſpeculative debates*, had none of thoſe adherencies, which do ſo directly gratifie him, yet ſtill he is ſecur'd of gaining ſomewhat at rebound; for alas, when mens faculties are thus employed, what Weapons are there left for the defence of true *practick vertue*, and God knows, ſhe needs them but too much: Mens *luſts* are grown ſubtle Diſputants, ſo that the moſt improved *reaſon* may find work enough to manage the Conteſt; And ſurely would Men of parts timely have bent their endeavours this way, Vice could not have got ſo ſtrong a party. Men are aſhamed to be *Proſelytes* to a weak Arguer, as thinking they muſt part with their *reputation*, as well as their *ſin*: and certainly nothing is a more general *diſcouragement* from Piety, than the *opinion of its Votaries* not being Perſons of Parts, and exalted Underſtandings; a Prejudice as old as the time of our *Saviour*, as may appear from *Job* 7. Would God our greateſt *Rabbies* would ſadly conſider how much they have contributed to this ſcandal, while by laying out their parts on *Polemick niceties*, they have neglected the more weighty part of their buſineſs, and given too much Atteſtation to that ſcandalous Maxim, that *Ignorance is the mother of Devotion*: Certainly this is quite to miſtake their *Commiſſion*, which is not that of a *Herauld*, to proclaim War amongſt Men, but that of an *Embaſſador*, to reconcile them firſt to holineſs, and by it to God: And doubtleſs one Soul gain'd to Piety, would more promote their account, than *many thouſands*

*thouſands* ſecured to a Sect or Party. We find how ſad the doom was of that Servant who wrapt up his Talent, but we have no cauſe to think it would have been at all eaſier if he had melted the Talent into bullets, to maintain the skirmiſh with his fellows: Whether that be not the caſe of ſome who have received not the *one* Talent but the *five*, I leave it to be diſcuſſed between God and their own Conſciences; but in the interim 'tis ſad to ſee how unhappily Men engage their endeavours, which ſeems to repreſent the reverſe of *Eſay*'s *Prophecy*, we have beat our Ploughſhares into Swords, and our Pruning-hooks into Spears, all the Inſtruments of Fertility and growth in Grace, into Engines of *War* and *Diſcord*; and then it muſt needs be a moſt deplorable condition to which Chriſtianity is reduced; which ſeems in this to be under the ſame calamity, which her diſtreſt Profeſſors ſuffer from the *Turkiſh* Tyranny, whilſt her hopefulleſt and moſt pregnant Children, are like *Janizaries* and *Timariots* trained up to fight againſt her. And let none wonder that I call it fighting againſt her, when yet perhaps none of them do formally renounce her, for that Circumſtance only determines the War to be *inteſtine*, not *foreign*; and if our own ſad Experiences had not too much qualified us to judge, I might appeal to the univerſal vote of Mankind, which of thoſe were the moſt deſtructive. Indeed were there no other act of hoſtility diſcernable, but that which we have hitherto inſiſted on, the intercepting

cepting her ſupplies, the cutting off from her that time, induſtry and gifts, whereby ſhe would be nouriſht and ſupported, that were irreparably injurious to her, and conſequently moſt grateful to that grand *Enemy*, who, as hath been ſhew'd, makes advantage of our Wranglings, or Diſſentions *with one another*, to reak his more inveterate Malice *on us all.*

## CHAP. X.

*A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Diſputes, as they ſupplant Charity.*

BUT alas, the miſchief of theſe Debates can never be deſcrib'd by bare *negatives*, there are multitudes of *poſitive ills*, that inſeparably adhere to them, and thoſe of ſo deſtructive a force, that if Chriſtianity were *beleaguered* and *famiſht* by the former, ſhe is *ſtorm'd* and *batter'd* by theſe, and ſo is aſcertain'd to ſink under all the methods of ruine. In the front of theſe we may well rank thoſe diſplacencies and animoſities which are the product of our ſpeculative differences, and which do indeed ſo naturally reſult from them, that 'tis not to be hoped ſo long as the *one* continues, that the *other* will ever ceaſe. For though in *practice* we often ſee a bewitching Sin dethrone the Reaſon, and make Men act as if they had no ſuch ſuperior

principle to guide them, yet in matters of *Speculation* their *affections* are generally ſtrongly influenc'd by their *Underſtandings*. We do not only approve, but love thoſe notions wherewith we are prepoſſeſt, which kindneſs as it propagates it ſelf to the *Abettors* of the ſame Tenets, ſo alſo it inſinuates diſlikes to the *oppoſers*. And as that oppoſition advances, ſo the diſguſt does too, till at laſt the Scene ſhifts, and the *Perſons* are at a greater war than the *Opinions*. But we need not thus derive a proof from the *cauſes*, when the thing does too demonſtrably atteſt it ſelf by the *effects*; for what iſſues are there of the mortalleſt hatred, which do not plentifully flow from this Fountain? *Humane nature* we know has but three ways of actuating its paſſions; by *thought*, by *word*, and by *deeds*; and we may ſurely conclude the feud very bitter that employs all theſe Engines, as 'tis too viſible this does; for though the *former* of theſe be in its own nature inſcrutable to all but Omniſcience; yet the *two latter* are according to *Chriſt*'s own Rule, of the *Tree by its fruits*, infallible *Criterions* of them; and thoſe make ſuch liberal diſcoveries, that I think I may appeal to any who have eſpous'd a *party*, whether they have not with the firſt diſcriminating rudiments of their own Sect, imbib'd a ſecret *confus'd prejudice* to all others. Nay, I fear there are but few of ſo mortified paſſions, as to have ſtopt there, and not advanc'd to a direct averſion, and alienation of mind. Indeed were it not for this, 'twere ſcarce poſſible for

for ſo many of the *Vulgar*, to be ſuch *Bigots* in their ſeveral factions; for alas, their Intellects are generally too *groſs*, to have any *clear* apprehenſion of the Points they contend for; their Leaders only give them ſome *general confus'd notions*, juſt enough to excite their *diſpleaſure* againſt all Diſſenters, and then their *anger* muſt preſently be call'd *Zeal*, and inſtead of the more uneaſie task of ſuppreſſing their paſſion, this expedient ſerves at once to hallow and gratifie it: Nay, ſo ridiculous have ſome mens prepoſſeſſions of this kind been, that they would ſcarce allow thoſe to be *entire men* whom they thought not *ſound believers*, but have phanſied I know not what *bodily* as well as *Mental* Monſtroſities in thoſe they were pleas'd to call *Hereticks*; a piece of childiſh credulity, which the emiſſaries of ſome factions have not diſdain'd to make their advantage of. But theſe inward diſguſts and rancours are but the firſt bound of this ball of contention, when this *leven* is once in the *heart*, it will quickly diffuſe it ſelf, and both *tongue* and *hands* will be tainted with it. Hence comes it, that diſputes in Religion are managed with ſuch virulency and bitterneſs, that one would think the Diſputants had put off much of *Humanity*, before they come thus to treat of *Divinity*. The *Government of the Tongue* is a piece of morality which ſober nature dictates, which yet in this inſtance many even of our greateſt Scholars ſeem totally to have unlearnt; For whether we conſider the unſeemly reproaches, or ri-

gid cenſures, wherewith almoſt all parties purſue their Antagoniſts, we have reaſon to ſay with S. *James*, *The tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly Poyſon:* Would God their *guilt* of this kind, did not ſo loudly proclaim it ſelf, as to ſuperſede the need of *proof.* 'Tis too obvious that the *Satyr* has uſurpt the chair, and *Polemick Diſcourſes* are degenerated into *Libels* and *Invectives*; our Controvertiſts fall from *arguments* to *reproaches*, as if their Zeal lay more to blaſt their adverſary's *Fame*, than confute his *error*; and were this only in perſonal extemporary debates, it might have the excuſe of an indeliberate paſſion. Indeed it were to be wiſht that all words of this ſort might vaniſh in that breath that utters them; that as they reſemble the Wind in *fury* and *impetuouſneſs*, ſo they might do alſo in *tranſientneſs*, and *ſudden expiration:* But alas, a courſe is taken to immortalize them, they become *Records*, and our moſt elaborate *controverſal Writings*, like the Earth after the curſe, over-run with theſe briers and thorns, Sarcaſms, Contumelies and Invectives filling ſo many *Pages*, that were thoſe weeded out, many *volumes* would be reduced to a more *moderate bulk* as well as *temper.* Nor are our *cenſures* any thing more modeſt than our *reproaches*, every petty difference is mutually upbraided to each party as a defection from the Faith, ſo that we ſcarce know a milder *name* than Hereſie, nor *doom*, than Damnation. And as if the viſible obliquities of errors would not afford us indictments enough againſt

againſt one another, there is a cloſer inſpection made, every *poſition* is ript up, and curiouſly diſſected, to ſee what *Embryo* is in its womb, what ſeeds there are of monſtrous productions, which though perhaps the native ſtrength of the Principle would never have *animated*, yet the preternatural heat of an Antagoniſt can quickly *hatch* them (like the *Chickens* at *grand Cairo*) into life, and vigorous being: and if by a long chain of (perhaps fallacious) Inferences, ſome ſuch Imputation is faſtned upon a *Theſis*, then all who embrace that, are charg'd alſo with all this *ſpurious brood*, though they never ſo ſolemnly renounce and diſclaim them. A practice ſure very uncharitable; for ſuppoſe ſuch *conſequences* never ſo regularly deduced from my *opinion*, yet ſo long as I ſeriouſly diſavow and deteſt them, I may indeed be thought *unwiſe* in not diſcerning the connexion, but ſure not *impious*. So that unleſs want of *Logick* be a *damning ſin*, no man can hence be authoriz'd to pronounce me *reprobate*: and I cannot think that God, whoſe rigor bends againſt the faults of our *wills*, rather than our *underſtandings*, and who at the laſt great Aſſize will aſſume our own Conſciences into the Judicature upon us, will ever ſentence me for thoſe *deductions*, how horrid ſoever, which I never made mine, or that I ſhall ever find my ſelf in Hell for a *miſperſuaſion* which I never entertain'd. But there are ſome whoſe Cenſures are not ſo *artificial*, yet no leſs *ſevere*, who beg their *Poſtulata*, and taking it for granted that ſuch and

ſuch are the only ſanctified Opinions, make them the *Shiboleth* by which to diſcriminate not only their own Friends, but God's too, lock up Heaven gates againſt any who bring not that Ticket for admittance; and though they make the way wide enough to receive the moſt *over-grown Sinner* of their own Opinion, yet they pronounce it impoſſible to the *ſtricteſt piety* of a Diſſenter. And upon ſuch grounds as theſe do we mutually doom one another to perdition, never conſidering, that whilſt we ſo briskly preſage *others* Damnation, we really prepare for our *own*. Alas, our eagerneſs to *heat the Furnace ſeven times hotter for all that bow not to our dictates*, does but expoſe us to the fate of *Nebuchadnezzar*'s *Officers*, *Deut.* 3. to be our ſelves conſumed in that flame, wherein we caſt them. 'Tis indeed to be wiſht we ſhould ceaſe to invade God's peculiar, by judging thoſe that muſt ſtand or fall to him: but if we will needs take his *office*, 'tis but equitable we take his *rules* too; and in our *Wrath* remember *Mercy*: But God be bleſſed 'tis the Judgment of our *upright*, yet *gracious* Maſter, that ſhall finally determine us; and not that of our paſſionate fellow-ſervants: If theſe were irreverſible, and the Key of the bottomleſs pit were in our *cuſtody*, we might give Satan *a Writ of Eaſe*, diſcharge him from his perambulations, he would need no more to walk about as a *Lion*, but might ſtill lie in his *Den*, and we ſhould bring in *prey* enough to glut the Devourer: For could we *execute* all we *condemn*, we might ask the Diſciples queſtion,

*Matth.*

*Matt.* 19. 25. *Who then can be ſaved?* But as theſe ſevere *cenſures*, are a preſent *violation of Charity*, ſo they tend to the perpetuating it by obſtructing a return to that *unity of Judgment*, which might make up the very *original breach*; for while Men reciprocally load each others Opinions and Perſons with deteſtable imputations, if they really ſpeak what they think, they do ſtill more deeply impreſs upon themſelves the prejudice to that which they accuſe, (*hatred* as well as *love* gathering ſtrength by being actuated:) but if they do indeed not believe their own *charge*, yet having once made it, either upon Intereſt or Paſſion, 'tis not probable they will want *pride* to maintain it; and when we conſider how ruling a *piece of carnality* that is, we cannot wonder if it indiſpoſe Men to *retractions*. I wiſh we had not too many, and too late inſtances of ſome whoſe weightieſt *objection* againſt a cauſe, has been their own former *violence* againſt it. When Men have once faſtned the brand of Hereſie, Prophaneneſs or Blaſphemy upon an *opinion*, they think they cannot afterwards become its *Proſelytes*, without either ſeeming to *aſſume* thoſe Guilts, or at leaſt that of having *falſly charg'd* them upon others: and the Horns of ſuch a *Dilemma* do ſo gore their *reputation*, that it often tempts to ſalve that with the *wounding of Conſcience*, and perſuades them rather to reject their *convictions*, than expoſe their *credits*. And certainly were this the only ill conſequent of our rigorous accuſations, it would be enough to pre-

judice them as unfit Inſtruments in a Goſpel-deſign; but though they ſuit not with that work to which they ſolemnly *pretend*, they are moſt accommodate to that they really produce: For if we examine in the third place, what *influence* theſe our eager conteſts have upon our *actions*, we ſhall find them fully proportionable to our *words*. And firſt negatively, 'tis apparent in too many, that they are apt to confine even the common offices of humanity to their own Sect: and others who do not ſo, yet ſhew ſo great partiality in diſpenſing them, as diſcovers the Name of *Chriſtian* is not half ſo charming, as that of their own *particular Faction*. Were inſtances of this kind as *needful* as they are *numerous*, 'twere eaſie to give multitudes: but I think none that has liv'd in our late confuſions can have wanted occaſions of obſerving it in *others*, at leaſt, if not in himſelf. But alas, *omiſſions* are ſcarce worth our notice, when there are ſo many *poſitive acts* of unkindneſs ſo viſible among us: They know little of *ancient*, and leſs of *modern* Times, that are unacquainted with the *mutual perſecutions*, which almoſt all parties have alternately rais'd, one againſt another among Chriſtians: *Confiſcations* and *Baniſhments*, *Gibbets* and *Flames*; Weapons God knows much too carnal for a ſpiritual warfare, yet much more in uſe than thoſe S. *Paul* recommends to *Timothy*, *gentleneſs*, and *meek inſtructing of Oppoſers*, 2 *Tim.* 2. 25, 26. And when 'tis conſider'd that thoſe Oppoſers too were Heathens, 'twill be more than a little ſtrange, that

Severity

Severity ſhould be allowable to *Brethren*, which was interdicted againſt *Aliens*. Is it an eaſier crime to reject the *entire body* of that Faith which was once deliver'd to the Saints, than to differ in the explication of ſome *one branch* of it? Nay, perhaps only of ſome *corollary* and *deduction* from it, which as far as it is humane, may be fallible, and therefore can no more command my *aſſent* than it ſatisfies my *judgment*; yet this is generally the moſt that can be affirmed of our differences; For almoſt what Party is there which doth not avowedly own all that *Faith* which conſtituted the firſt *Chriſtians*? Would God we did as uniformly embrace the Charity too; and then moſt of our diſputes would be ſuperſeded, at leaſt ſo calm'd, that there ſhould be none of thoſe deſtructive effects which they now produce: For alas, how many funeral Piles has this prepoſterous Zeal kindled! So that what ſome ſaid of *Draco*'s Laws, may too juſtly be applied to our Arguments, that they have been writ rather in *Blood* than *Ink*. But as Chriſt when he forewarn'd his Diſciples of the enſuing perſecution, tells them, not only they ſhall be kill'd, but they ſhall be put out of the Synagogue: So now as if Chriſtians were emulous of every branch of *Jewiſh* cruelty, we tranſcribe that part of the copy too, and either by cauſleſs excommunicating *others*, or ſeparating our *ſelves*, we deny the benefit of *publick Communion* to each other: And this is a greater ſeverity than the former, by how much more implacable our hate is againſt what

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we count *error*, than what we know to be vice; and by how much the concerns of the *Soul* are more eſtimable than thoſe of the *Body*. The inveterateneſs of thoſe Feuds which riſe from Opinion, may clearly be diſcovered in this inſtance: Let a Man have committed all the *outrages* which may render him unworthy to live; yet when we proſecute him to *death*, we willingly afford him all helps towards his *future ſtate*, and no Man is ſo inhumane as to refuſe to pray, either *for* or *with* a Malefactor; yet ſome few *ſpeculative differences* are ſuch a gulph betwixt us, that we cannot meet even in that we all acknowledge our common Duty, *The Worſhip of our God*. Certainly among all the accurſed iſſues of our *contention*, there is none more malignant and criminal, than this of *Schiſm* and *Separation*, and would Men judge diſpaſſionately, more irrational too: for doubtleſs were our caſe ſtated to any ſober Heathen, he would never be able to gueſs, why they who equally acknowledge the advantage and neceſſity of *Prayer*, confeſs the ſame God, have the ſame common wants in this World, and hopes in the next, may not ask in the ſame *Form* and in the ſame *Place*. Alas, is it not enough to be at diſtance where we *differ*, but muſt we be ſo alſo where we *agree*? Is Unity ſo dreadful to us, that we muſt act contradictions to eſcape it? Surely this is a *ſtranger faſcination* of the Spirit of Diviſion, than that in the Goſpel-*Demoniack*, which enabled him to break all bonds in ſunder, and like it, abhors the approaches of

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a *Saviour*, crying out, *What have we to do with thee, thou Jeſus the Son of God, art thou come to torment us?* Who knows what a powerful Exorciſm the united interceſſions of the Chriſtian World might have been; had we joyntly deprecated our quarrels, God might have found a way to have compos'd them, though we could not; and our *tears* might have cemented thoſe breaches which our *diſſents* made, but our *Separation* widens, I know the venerable names of the Sanctions of *Holy Church*, the Hundred thirty ſeventh Canon of the Code of the Univerſal Church, which ſays in expreſs terms, Ὅτι οὐ δεῖ αἱρετικοῖς ἢ σχισματικοῖς συνεύχεσθαι, *that we ought not to pray with Hereticks or Schiſmaticks*, and very many warm expreſſions of the *Fathers* are producible in this caſe: But till we excommunicate with the Tears and Sorrows, and publick concernment of the primitive Chriſtians, who refus'd all acts of kindneſs only out of love, and the moſt ardent Charity, we may by no means lay claim to their pattern, whoſe eſtrangements only flow from malice and inveterate hate. Would we indeed comport with the Example of thoſe happy times, we ſhould have fear'd the *guilt of Schiſm* in our ſelves ſo much, as not to have lightly charged it upon others; we ſhould have prayed for the *converſion* of Diſſenters, not laid *Anathema*'s upon them, and prayed for their *confuſion*. S. *Paul*, we ſee, *Heb.* 10. 25. reckons the *forſaking of Aſſemblies*, as a degree, at leaſt preparative of *Apoſtaſie*; and from his time throughout all the purer Ages of the Church

Church the holy Fathers have generally branded it as the higheſt impiety; and no marvel, for it is one of thoſe Gyant-like ſins, which not only oppreſſes *men*, but invades even *God Himſelf*. 'Tis the mangling and aſſaſſinating *that Body* to which Chriſt owns and *inſeparable connexion*; the putting him to head ſcatter'd limbs, inſtead of an entire compact body, as if we meant to refute S. *Paul*, ſhew him 'tis poſſible that *Chriſt may be divided*. Good God! what ſhall we ſay when we ſee Heathen Souldiers eſtimate Chriſt's *Coat* higher than Chriſtians do his *Body*: they thought the *one* too good to be parted, but we ceaſe not to tear and mangle the *other*, and which is yet more monſtrous, make it *a part of our Religion* to do ſo. We name our *Opinions* our *Faith*, and when under that Title we have enſhrin'd them, *we* make more barbarous Immolations than ever the moſt *ſavage Heathens* did. They ſacrificed ſome few objects of their Love, their *Children*, but we ſacrifice the very *affliction*, and think our Zeal *lukewarm* till it have reduced our Charity to *aſhes*. And now if we compare theſe our *Diviſions*, *Wrath* and *Bitterneſs*, which thoſe fundamental Goſpel-precepts of *Unity*, *Love* and *Meekneſs*, we muſt ſurely ſay we have not there ſo learn'd Chriſt. And then how ridiculous is it, to pretend a Zeal to that Goſpel, whoſe very foundations we undermine? Peace is at once the *bleſſing* and *duty* of Chriſtians, and thoſe heats of *ſpeculative* Conteſts which violate it, will certainly never ſerve to make us either good or happy. And therefore till

till Charity ceaſe to be an Eſſential part of Chriſtianity (which certainly we muſt burn our Bibles e'er we can ſuppoſe) we muſt conclude, that our Diſputes, and the ways whereby we manage them, how much ſoever they pretend to preſerve, do indeed evacuate and deſtroy true, that is, *Practick Chriſtianity.*

## CHAP. XI.

*A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Diſputes, as they engage upon Ill Arts and Scandalous Practices, to ſuſtain the eſpouſed Cauſe and Party.*

AND yet ſo unhappily are many men miſtaken, that theſe *irregular heats* which thus waſte the vital Spirits of Religion, are thought the moſt *Soveraign Cordials* to ſupport them. The higheſt *Paroxyſm* of this Fever is deem'd the perfecteſt *Health.* Men eſteem the overflowing of their *Gall*, the exuberance of their *Zeal*; and then all the Promiſes to the *faithful Combatant* in Chriſt's Camp, they confidently appropriate to that their ſo eminent *Grace*: though indeed it can with no more propriety be call'd ſo, than *Pharaoh's lean Kine* might be ſaid to be *fat*, becauſe they had devour'd thoſe that were ſo. In plain terms, Men lay ſo great weight upon their being of right Opinions, and their eagerneſs of abetting them, that they account *that* the

the *unum neceſſarium*, and think the propagating of thoſe ſo *important a ſervice* to God, as will juſtifie the uſe of the moſt *interdicted inſtruments*, legitimate the moſt *enormous Commiſſions*, that they can phanſie contributive to that pious End: And moreover commute for the neglect of *Practick Duties* in the general tract of their *lives*. I ſhall not here urge the hazard of mens erring in the choice of Opinions, nay, the certainty that of many oppoſite one only can be the right; and then to all ſuch as miſs that, their very groundwork fails them. I ſhall only confine my ſelf to the *malignant influence* this Perſuaſion has on *practice*, and in that reſpect I cannot but affirm it a moſt *pernicious deluſion*, which as it tends extremely to the enhanſing the bitterneſs of our conteſts, ſo it may juſtly be reckoned among the worſt effects of them, and is a moſt *irrefragable proof* how much they obſtruct the vital *efficacy* of *Religion* in our hearts. Nor is it any new thing for men thus to deceive themſelves; for we find ſuch Confidences as theſe frequently upbraided to the *Jews*, both by the *Prophets* and *Chriſt* himſelf; they thought their *Zeal* to the Temple and ritual obſervances ſo invincibly meritorious, as no *Crime* could defeat, and that their *legal puriſications* would render them acceptable in God's Eyes, in ſpight of all their *Moral Pollutions*: But how fallacious a hope this was, the many ſevere increpations of God do ſufficiently atteſt. Yet certainly their guilt was far below ours; the things they ſo depended on were *parts*, though

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not the *whole* of their Duty; thoſe *Ordinances* though perhaps ſomewhat *adulterated* by *Rabbinical* mixtures, yet for the main were *inſtituted* by God himſelf, and that with a deſign of diſcriminating and ſeparating them from the reſt of the world; and ſuch peculiarities and privileges as theſe, might have an aptneſs to excite that preſumption: But alas, the caſe is otherwiſe with moſt of us; they are not the *Revelations* of God's Will, not the *Teſtament* of our dying Redeemer, but ſome *Codicils* and *Annexes* of our own we ſo earneſtly abett. 'Tis not the *Text* (for then 'twere impoſſible for any that receiv'd the ſame Canon of Scripture to differ) but our *gloſſes* to which we pay ſuch Reverence; and when on that account we *ſever* our ſelves from thoſe to whom the Commands of God, the Blood of our Saviour have moſt cloſely *united* and *cemented* us; we can yet make a ſhift to think that there is ſo much of Sacred in this, as ſhall not only render it highly rewardable, but alſo hallow all other profanations of our lives; and in our *Jehu*-march upon ſuch an expedition, can turn all regrets of Conſcience (like *Joram*'s Meſſengers) behind us. That this is ſo, none can doubt who obſerve with what boldneſs men ruſh upon the moſt *unchriſtian ſins*, in purſuit of what they phanſie a *Chriſtian Cauſe*. Were it not for this *amulet*, how were it poſſible for any to think they may venture upon Perjury, Sacrilege, Murder, Regicide, any thing without impeachment to their *Saintſhip*; nay, to think that the only danger lies on the other ſide,

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in being *remiſsly wicked*, that to *ſlack* any thing of the utmoſt ſpeed, is *to do the work of the Lord negligently*. Yet that this has been a prevailing Perſuaſion, we have had too many, and too ſad inſtances; and God grant we may not find them ſo repeated, that our *ſence* may ſuperſede the *uſe* of our memories concerning them; nor has this been peculiar to one only Sect; but thoſe who are otherwiſe at the wideſt diſtance unite in this Principle. They are not only *Fanaticks* that can ſay *grace* over the fouleſt *crimes*, and conſecrate them to the uſe of a *good cauſe*; if we examine the *Dypticks* either of Conclave or Conſiſtory, we ſhall find ſome Saints upon that account, who could never have been ſo upon any other. And when we conſider how often *Heaven* has been mortgaged to gain Auxiliaries from *Hell*, how men have been encouraged to the moſt *damning ſins*, by *promiſes* of being certainly ſaved; we muſt either think that a *Holy Cauſe* is omnipotent enough to reverſe *God's Decrees*, to ſave whom he would *damn*, or elſe that this pretence is one of the moſt ruinous deceits, the moſt fatal Treachery to Souls that ever *Satan* contriv'd, who though he do in all inſtances play the *Mountebank*, yet ſure never more than when on confidence of this *Antidote* he perſwades us thus to ſwallow down his *deadlieſt Poyſon*.

I MUST not here attempt to enumerate all the *unchriſtian practices*, that have on this ſcore been made, not only *lawful* but *meritorious*; yet there is one of ſo frequent uſe, that I muſt needs adver-

advert unto it, and that is, thoſe *calumnies* and *falſehoods*, which are now become a piece of *Eccleſiaſtick* as well as *State-policy*, and a great part of that offenſive armour wherewith our controvertiſts aſſault one another. Indeed if we conſider how many *forges* are daily going for theſe *engines*, we ſhall have reaſon to think, all Parties have an high eſteem of their *uſefulneſs*. Of theſe Calumnies there are too many ſorts and degrees to be here particulariz'd: And indeed thoſe, who permit themſelves to uſe any, can be ſuppos'd to have no other *boundaries* than the advantage of their *cauſe*: And accordingly as that ſeems to exact, they lay their *Scene*; ſometimes they traduce the perſons of their oppoſers, and by raiſing prejudices againſt them, hope ſome of it will reflect upon their Doctrine: did Men generally know how to diſtinguiſh between *reports* and *certainties*, this *ſtratagem* would be as *unskilful* as it is *uningenuous*. But conſidering the vulgar temper, it's not unaptly ſuited to it. This it ſeems was anciently underſtood, it being the old *Greek* adviſe, θαρρῶν λας ἅπλεσθαι καὶ δάκνειν πρὸς διαβολάς, ὅτι κἂν ἀκριβῶς ἀποτρίψῃ τὸ ἕλκος ὁ δεδηγμένος, ἡ οὐλὴ μένει τῆς διαβολῆς: *To calumniate ſtoutly, for that how perfectly ſoever the wound of reproach be healed, there will remain a ſcar; and though we wipe away with never ſo much care the dirt thrown at us, there will be left ſome ſulliage behind*: And accordingly this was the Expedient the *Pagans* us'd againſt the *Primitive Chriſtians*, to put them thus in the skins of beaſts, & ſhapes of monſters, & then worry them to

death. And this is the method ſtill, though heightned and improved; and our *Religion* has ſuffer'd infinitely more ſince we us'd it againſt *each other*, than when they manag'd it againſt the *whole community*. But beſides this *defamation* of Perſons, another branch of this black Art is the *depraving* of Writings, both in the ſence and very letter, and direct words; for the former of theſe, whoſoever obſerves the ſtrange perverſions, and affected miſtakes of mens meanings viſible in many of our *Polemick* Diſcourſes, will ſure reſolve that a man's *intentions*, as well as his *words* and *actions*, may be calumniated: Nor does the *letter* ſcape better, every period which threatens danger to the cauſe muſt be mutilated and diſmembred, and as *Sampſon* was by the *Philiſtines*, loſe its Hair and Eyes, and then be made ſport for the whole party. And I fear there are too few, who do not in this caſe take the *Jewiſh* reparation, an *Eye for an Eye*, &c. retaliate to the adverſary the foul play they receive. But ſome advance yet higher, and think it not enough to make an Argument or Teſtimony uſeleſs to the *Enemy*, unleſs they draw it over to *themſelves*, make it *betray* the ſide it was to *maintain*, and as a Conqueror uſes to reſtore Arms to ſuch of the adverſe party, as will turn to his, ſo after they have by ſatisfactions ſecur'd themſelves of its aid, it ſhall then be made as potent as is poſſible, and with ſuch kind of *Renegado troops* as theſe, ſome *cauſes* have been much ſupported. Yet were this *violation* offer'd only to the writings of living men, who might vindi-

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cate it, 'twere not ſo tranſcendently *ignoble*, but it moſt frequently falls upon thoſe, who have made their beds in the duſt; who have chang'd their own *Form*, and cannot ſecure their *Writings* from the ſame *fate*: Nay, 'tis yet more frequently *thoſe*, whom we have all reaſon to ſuppoſe, and moſt of us profeſs to believe, *glorified Saints*; and this ſuperadds a daring preſumption to all other circumſtances of the guilt, and heightens an Injuſtice into Sacrilege. It has always been held the moſt deteſtable ſort of *Forgery* to counterfeit *Teſtaments*, though the *Teſtator* were of never ſo low a quality, or his *bequeſts* of never ſo mean a value: And ſhall it now paſs for a piece of *commendable dexterity*, and art of manage to falſifie thoſe *writings* by which the Father of the Church deſign'd to entail *truth* and *piety*, not *ſtrife* and *faction* upon her? We know, *Necromancy* has juſtly been reputed one of the moſt horrid forms of *Sorcery*, becauſe it enforced *dead* men to ſpeak what the living were inquiſitive to hear. I leave it to be conſider'd what this wants of that, beſides the dreadful *ceremonies* of the Incantation; certainly 'tis a guilt which nothing but our too familiar acquaintance with it could make unformidable. And indeed this whole method of ſerving a *cauſe* by ſuch *ſiniſter means* is ſo utterly repugnant to the Principles even of ingenuous nature, that we can ſcarce caſt a greater ſcandal upon an Opinion, than to ſhew it needs ſuch Aids. 'Tis by *Hiſtorians* branded as an execrable fact in him, who to ſecure himſelf from a *neighbour*

*Prince*, call'd the *Turk* into Chriſtendom: But ſure thoſe who to fortifie their ſide have brought in this Artifice of *calumniating* and *falſifying*, have done an Act no leſs *impious*; the conſtitution of *Chriſtianity* agreeing full as well with the *Alcoran* as with theſe *Piæ fraudes*; as ſome of them who perhaps mean the *fraud* more than the *Piety*, are pleas'd to call them. Nay indeed they accord not much better with *Philoſophy* than *Divinity*, every Man knows the nature of contraries is to combate and expel, not to cheriſh and ſupport one another. How abſurd is it then for thoſe, who ſay they deſign to advance *Truth*, to make *falſhood* their Inſtrument? I wiſh they would experiment to accommodate their ſecular concerns at the ſame rate, let them *cool* them in the Fire, *warm* them in the Froſt, and *feed* themſelves by perpetual Faſting, and when they find cauſe to commend the efficacy of that Method, they may with fairer pretence in this higher inſtance reconcile the feuds of Reaſon and of Nature, and make a *lye* the Evidence of *Truth*. In the interim, it may well paſs for *Sophiſtry* as well as *ſin*; and doubtleſs whatever advantages are hop'd for to private Sects and Parties by this art, Chriſtian Religion in general is hugely prejudiced by it: For when men ſhall compare the veracity of Heathens with our falſhoods; learn from *Hiſtorians*, that among the *Perſians*, αἴσχιστον τὸ ψεύδεσθαι νενόμισται, *to lye was deem'd a fault of the greateſt turpitude*, and they therefore laid an ill Character upon perſons in debt, ὅτι ἀναγκη τὰ ὀφειλόμενα καὶ τὸ ψεύδεσθαι λέγειν, *becauſe*

*becauſe he that is ſo muſt needs tell lyes*: And when they ſhall ſee in the Laws of *Cingis*, a barbarous *Tartar*, Lying made a *capital crime*, and yet among Chriſtian *Caſuiſts* made a *holy artifice*, they will be tempted to think our *end* as fictitious as our *way*; and that our Religion has little countenance from *Truth*, which is thus fain to make *lyes* its Refuge. Thus unhappily do theſe Arrows revert, not only on *thoſe* who ſhoot them, but in the face of *Chriſtianity* it ſelf, which is defam'd, and traduced by thoſe *ſlanders*, we aim at our *private adverſaries*.

BUT beſides this *direct*, there are other more *oblique* Ways of making *vice* ſubſervient to *Religion*, or to ſpeak more properly, of making *Religion* ſubſervient to *vice*; for ſome Zealots of ſeveral parties, who more regard the *numerouſneſs* than *purity* of their Profeſſors, diſcerning how much the ſenſual part of Mankind ſtartles at the ſtrictneſs of Goſpel-precepts, are induſtrious to take of that diſcouragement, not by convincing them of the real divine ſweetneſs and pleaſantneſs of them, but by debaſing and accommodating them more to the carnal appetite: Yet here Men proceed not all alike, ſome uſe Chriſt's yoke, as *Hananaiah* did that of *Jeremy*, break it quite off; others only eſſay to ſlacken and alleviate it, that it may not pinch the luſts of *libertine Proſelytes*: Of the firſt ſort are ſuch, as having made the *adherence* to their Party the infallible mark of *Sanctification*, and that Sanctification of *Election*, do from thence proclaim to all who are ſo qualified

a general Jubilee and manumiſſion from the bond even of *Chriſt*'s as well as *Moſes*'s Law, or if ſome of them allow it to remain an impotent director, yet while they affirm that *God ſees no ſin in his Elect*, or if he do, beholds them as a Father does the harmleſs falls of his Child, rather with *ſmiles* than *anger*, they make the *violations* of it ſo ſafe, that they are too ſure to be many, and between abrogating and thus enervating a law, the *difference* is merely verbal.

OF the ſecond ſort are ſome, who by indulgent and partial gloſſes, ſeek to mollifie the ſeverity of Chriſt's Commands. That contrive for their Clients not the *means* of Obeying, but the *arts* of Eſcaping them. Like the *unjuſt Steward*, teach their Lord's Debtors to *write Fifty inſtead of a Hundred*; and decide Caſes of Conſcience more according to the *intereſts* and *paſſions* of Men, than the *Will* of Chriſt. There are a Generation of Men, of whoſe Dexterity in this faculty the world has taken ſo much notice, that I need not name them, a ſort of eaſie *Caſuiſts* who ſeem to have erected a *Court of Equity* to relieve Men againſt the *rigour of Divine Law*; and there is little doubt but they ſhall find enough ready to make ſuch *appeals*: Men love to be Chriſtians as cheap as they can, and therefore will cloſe with that party, which offers the eaſieſt terms: And then while theſe ſpiritual *Pioneers* do thus enlarge the narrow way, make it a road as well for the Beaſt as the Man, the *brutiſh ſenſual*, as well as *rational divine* Part of us, no wonder though Sholes of

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Converts throng in to them. But 'tis to be consider'd that all this while this is winning Proselytes to themselves, not to God; the gaining them to a *Sect*, not a *Religion*; at least not to that pure religion, and undefiled, which the grand Author of our Faith has both exemplified, and propos'd to us; for how much that suffers by this way of propugning private opinions, is more than enough apparent. Yet so ambitious are our prime leaders of such Trophies, that in order to them some are said to ascend yet a step higher, and besides this general encouragement they give to Mens Lusts by *taking off* Restraints, do in some cases actually *promote* and *excite* them. For when they see a licentious person whose *acquest* they judge beneficial to their *cause*, they have artifices of fomenting his riots, do not only take off the *bridle*, but use the *spur* also, hoping that at the rebound it may conduce to their *End*. If any think it impossible it should do so, let them consider that among our various Opinions some there are which sell Heaven much cheaper than others dare, that allow such *easie attonements* as the most *habitual sinner* need not despair of: and then the most infallible means to ascertain such to that side, is to make them too bad for any other. For when a Man is resolute to keep his *sins* while he *lives*, and yet unwilling to relinquish all *hopes* when he *dies*, 'tis more than probable he will embrace that profession which bids fairest to the reconciling those so distant interests; and therefore the *greater Malefactor* he is,

the more ſure he will be *to fly to the horns of this Altar*; the nearer ſinking, the apter to catch at theſe reeds; ſo that the Project is not *impolitick*, though God knows ſo *impious*, that 'tis much fitter for the School of *Machiavel* than of *Chriſt*; and ſeems to verifie that imputation as to a part of Chriſtians, which *Julian* once as falſely as maliciouſly affixt upon the whole: *That their Church was an Aſylum and ſanctuary for the moſt flagitious offenders, and protected thoſe guilts to which no other Religion allow'd any Expiation.* 'Tis indeed ſo horrid that I cannot think there are many *Conſciences* ſo cauteriz'd by this fiery *zeal* as to admit it, yet that ſome have done it, there is too much certainty, and therefore 'tis no improper inſtance in our preſent argument; for if Mens *eagerneſs* to ſupport their ſeveral ſides, can tranſport them to ſuch *attempts* as theſe, 'tis abundant Evidence how much Chriſtianity loſes by theſe conteſts of under factions, which while they pretend to *guard*, do indeed *invade* her under her own Colours.

BUT beſides the faults Men commit with this immediate *avow'd aſpect* upon their Religion, there are others which ſlily ſhroud themſelves under the *skirt* of its *mantle*; I mean thoſe *Sins* of common life, which though they pretend not to advance the cauſe, yet when acted by a *Zealot* are thought to be overwhelm'd by his heroick *Piety*. Indeed Men who make themſelves ſo much work about others *faith*, are ſeldom at leiſure to regulate their own *practice*, and ſo have no way

of

of ſtating their Accounts with God, but by balancing the *exceſs* of the one againſt the *defects* of the other: How ſuch reckonings will paſs the grand Audit, 'tis I think not hard to divine; but in the interim, it keeps them very chearful and ſecure, teaches them a Receipt to retain all their *Sins*, and yet loſe none of their *confidence*; ſo that when they have immerſt themſelves in all filthineſs both of Fleſh and Spirit, they can truſt their zeal to refine them from all that Droſs. Nor does it only thus reconcile them to their own vices, but to other Mens alſo, whoſe moſt brutiſh ſenſualities they can look on with perfect patience, nay even *Atheiſm* it ſelf can have *fair Quarter*: They are not much diſcompoſed to ſee Men have *no Religion*, 'tis only the having *one different* from their own that awakes their indignation; then like *Saul* when ſeiz'd on by the *evil ſpirit*, they caſt about their Javelins, think no rigor too great on ſuch a provocation; yet even here they have intervals, and the very ſame perſons who are thus at odds upon a *religious*, can unite upon a *vitious* account. Thoſe who mutually denounce *damnation* to each other, can with full accord combine in thoſe *practices* which will aſcertain it to them both, as if they ſo much fear'd to have their *predictions* defeated, that they would be each others *convoy* to the land of darkneſs. Thoſe that will by no means meet at the *Church*, know not when to part at the *Tavern*, and though they will not joyntly partake of the *Cup of the Lord*, are yet very ſociable at the *Cup*

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*of Devils*; I mean thoſe exceſſive debauches, which are a moſt acceptable drink offering to thoſe infernal Spirits. Have we not ſeen many whoſe diſtant opinions have faſtened upon one another the brand of *Antichriſtianiſm*, who have yet like *Gog* and *Magog* joyn'd againſt the holy City? And thoſe who could never agree on the way of ſetting up *Chriſt's Throne*, have yet been very unanimous in pulling down the *King's*. Thus alas, do we juſtle one another out of the *narrow path* that leads to life, but can hand in hand run our Career in the *broad way* of deſtruction. And doubtleſs this great unevenneſs, theſe ſpiritual feuds, and carnal endearments between the ſame perſons; this *impetuous zeal*, and as *impetuous luſts* in the ſame breaſts could never be, did not Men depend ſo confidently on the *one*, as to think it will commute, and ſatisfie for the *other*. But alas, how groundleſs a Preſumption this is, the whole tenour of the Goſpel does abundantly witneſs. In all that grand *Charter* where is there the leaſt clauſe importing ſuch an *immunity*? I am ſure there are multitudes that aſſert the contrary. Indeed the whole frame of the Evangelical Covenant is totally againſt it: That requiring an entire uniform Sanctity, and allowing no other *privilege* to the *ſins* of the moſt knowing Profeſſors, but a *preheminence* in *puniſhment*, the being beaten with many *ſtripes*. And when 'tis conſider'd that the *end* of all Religion is but the drawing us to a *conformity* with God, the impreſſing on us ſome Character of his eternal goodneſs

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and holineſs, 'twill be as abſurd as impious to believe that our *zeal* to any Religion can abſolve us from that *purity* which is the end and deſign of all. And while this is the way Men take to approve their piety, 'tis no marvel to find ſo *many* Chriſtians, and ſo *little* Chriſtianity in the World: for that is not to be eſtimated by the *number* of its Profeſſors, but by their *Obedience* to its Rules, and he that gives up his *name* to it and not his *heart*, will receive as little *advantage* by it, as he brings *honour* to it, and how little that is in reſpect of its internal Efficacy, is I preſume competently evidenced.

BUT that we may more throughly diſcern how univerſally deſtructive our *wranglings* are to it, in all its *concerns*, let us a little examine whether they do not endamage it even in reſpect of *outward profeſſion* alſo. This may ſeem a ſtrange Query to thoſe who think their *diſputes* about Religion are to denominate them the great *confeſſors* of the Age: yet certainly there is but too much ground not only for the *enquiry*, but to reſolve it in the *affirmative*. And if it prove ſo, 'twill infer but ſadly to thoſe who having laid the whole ſtreſs of their Hopes upon their zeal to advance their Faith, will be found to have *pull'd down* more than they have *built up*. Now Chriſtianity may in reſpect of profeſſion decay two ways, either in its *hopes*, or in its *poſſeſſion*, the one in relation to *Aliens*, the other to *Diſciples*. The firſt by hindring the acceſs of *new* Converts, the ſecond by ſtaggering or alienating

ting the *old*, and both theſe ways ſhe viſibly appears to ſuffer by our diviſions. And firſt if we conſult but our experience, if we truſt but our own obſervations, we cannot but confeſs that the Goſpel has long been at a great ſtand: That that *Sun* which at its firſt ariſing was like *David*'s, *Pſal.* 19. ſurrounded the world in a vigorous efficacious motion, is ſince become like *Joſhua*'s, *Joſh.* 10. 12. arreſted in its courſe: nay like *Hezekiah*'s, gone backward, *Iſa.* 38. 8. *Mahumetiſm* (if not *Paganiſm*) having long taken up its ſeat in divers of the moſt flouriſhing Apoſtolick Plantations. A ſad change, that from the daily and numerous acceſſion of the firſt times, it ſhould now become a kind of *Prodigy*, a piece of *news*, ſcarce heard in an Age, that one ſingle *Proſelyte* is gain'd to the *Church*; yet that thus it is, is too obvious to be denied. And truly it is not much leſs apparent that our diſſentions have in a great degree contributed to it. For firſt, as to the *extirpation* of the Eaſtern Churches, he that ſhall examine the records of thoſe times, will have cauſe to ſay, their Jangling and Diviſions were not only in a *moral* or *divine*, but even in a *proper natural ſence*, the Inſtruments of it. The *Turk* only coming in at thoſe breaches which themſelves had made, nor had their *Candleſtick* probably been removed, had they not firſt abus'd its *light*, to the ſetting themſelves in *Combuſtion*. That the ſame *cauſe* has not yet had the ſame *effect* among us, is owing not to its *unaptneſs* to produce it, but to the admirable *patience* and *mercy* of God, who yet with-holds

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that fatal Judgment, which we do our parts to pull upon our ſelves; our mutual violences againſt one another herein unhappily combining and making one united force againſt us all. But though the *divine goodneſs* hath hitherto ſo countermined our *treachery* to our ſelves, as not to ſuffer us to enjoy that ſtate of darkneſs we have ſo courted, yet certainly our *contentions* are extremely acceſſary to the continuing it upon others, our manly *new* and *wandring lights*, however they fail of having that property of the *Pillar of Fire*, *Exod.* 14. of illuminating and conducting the *Iſraelites*, yet too much anſwer its other, in becoming *cloud* and *darkneſs* to the *Ægyptians*; there being ſcarce any thing more apt to intercept the beams of the Sun of Righteouſneſs from the Heathen world, every of thoſe *little encloſures* our Factions have made in the Church, becoming a *great partition-wall* to keep others out of it: This may be made evident in ſeveral reſpects. As firſt, in relation to thoſe many *moral obliquities* in which our eager diſputes do (as hath already been ſhewed) betray us, which cannot but give ſo much *ſcandal* to any conſidering Man, that we can ſcarce hope any can turn to us as to a better Religion, but will rather think it the way to relinquiſh all; to obliterate thoſe *native impreſſions* of Piety and Honeſty they brought with them into the world, ſo that if we expect any *Proſelytes*, it muſt be only ſuch as would live *worſe* than mere *nature* allows them.

BUT

BUT this though as important a conſideration as can well be, I ſhall not here inſiſt on, having in the ſecond Section given ſome inſtances how apt our *Morality* is to deſame our *Divinity*, and confirm men in Oppoſition to it. But though this be a great, yet 'tis not the only means by which our Diſſentions hinder the progreſs of the Goſpel, for they do not only make *Infidels* leſs inclinable to receive it, but *us* to propagate it. Thoſe do ſo buſie and engroſs us, that there is neither leiſure nor heart left for this. Our *activeſt Spirits* are ſo engaged at home in aſſerting their *private quarrels*, that all ſuch *foreign deſigns* are forgot. For as in *Civil*, ſo in *Eccleſiaſtical* concerns, every one is more Induſtrious to advance his peculiar intereſt than that of the *community*, accordingly we find innumerable promulgers of every new Opinion. No *Sect* wants its *Apoſtles* to propagate and diffuſe it; but where are there any that have the like care for the main *Root* of Chriſtian Religion, which they have for theſe little *Twigs* and *Off-ſets* which they have planted in their own Gardens? How many ages muſt we look back to find a Man that has made it his buſineſs to convert *Infidels* to the Faith? 'Tis true indeed there are ſome very magnificent relations of *modern attempts* this way, of great induſtry ſome have us'd to bring the moſt ſavage Nations to the obedience of Chriſt: but if we examine, 'twill be obvious, the main deſign was to ſubject them to themſelves. 'Twas not ſo much their *Heatheniſm* as their *territories* they invaded, and

and such *Apoſtles* as theſe are ill qualified to make S. *Paul*'s profeſſion, 2 *Cor.* 12. 16. *I ſeek not yours but you.* And the ſucceſs of ſuch Eſſays have been anſwerable to the motive; they have won *Riches* but not *Souls.* The *Goſpel* in one hand and a *Sword* in the other has made many *Slaves*, but I fear few *Chriſtians.* Indeed, what encouragement had thoſe poor creatures to receive a Religion from their Oppreſſors? Why ſhould they think that thoſe who tortur'd and kill'd their *bodies*, were really concern'd to ſave their *Souls*? Or that thoſe who would not permit them to enjoy what was their own, meant to help them to any thing better? And while the *felicities* of another world were recommended to them only by *ſuch*, as had deprived them of all in *this*, we cannot wonder at their *little appetite* to embrace them; or to find the oppreſt *Indians* proteſt againſt that *heaven* where the *Spaniards* are to be their cohabitants. In ſhort, this is ſure ſuch a method of *Evangelizing*, as too widely differs from that which firſt planted the *Church*, to be likely to advance its *growth*: ſo that notwithſtanding all pretences of this kind, we may reſume our aſſertion, and conclude, that our *inteſtine diſcords* (perhaps not thoſe alone) have diverted the *Zeal* of this more Chriſtian undertaking, and left a great part of the world under that invincible Ignorance S. *Paul* mentions, *Rom.* 10. 14. *How ſhall they call on him, in whom they have not believed, and how ſhall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard; and how ſhall they hear without a preacher?*

*preacher* ? and God knows whether we have not herein provided better for their Excuſe than our own.

THERE is yet another way by which our *diviſions* impede their *converſion*, and that is by giving them *prejudice* to that Doctrine about which our ſelves cannot agree. 'Tis an univerſal Maxim that *truth is always conſonant to it ſelf*; and therefore where they ſee ſo little *Unity*, they have too much *temptation* to doubt of Truth. He that wandring ſhould meet a Company that offer to conduct him to his Journeys end, might reaſonable incline to deliver himſelf up to their *guidance* ; but if he find them unagreed upon the way, one Diſputing for this, and another for that, and every one proteſting againſt all but his own; he would ſure retract his *confidence*, and think they offer'd him only more variety of miſtakes, reſolve it as ſafe to truſt himſelf to his *own* Errors as other *mens*. And this alas, ſeems to be too exact a parallel of the preſent caſe ; we Chriſtians do ſo mutually damn one another, that a poor *Turk* or *Heathen* will think, he rather *multiplies* than *ends* his Danger by aſſociating himſelf with us ; for there being ſo many parties, which ſoever he joyns himſelf to, there will be abundant odds againſt him ; ſo that if he could be ſecur'd the truth were among us, yet the great difficulty of finding it out, would be a very diſheartening conſideration. Beſides, Men love in *tranſactions* of great importance to have as many and as *credible vouchers* as may be, and upon that

that ſcore 'twill ſure be but a cold inducement to any to turn *Chriſtian*, to foreſee, that when he has done ſo, he ſhall be *diſown'd* by far the greater part of that number, and that at his entrance into the *Church*, he ſhall be met with almoſt as many *Anathema's*, as when he was an *Infidel*. Nay, I ſcarce know whether I may call it an entrance into the *Church*, or rather into a *Conventicle*, or *particular Congregation*, our Schiſms and Separations having hardly left a poſſibility of *external communion* with the *univerſal Church*, ſince the Communicating with one part of it, does infallibly Excommunicate from another. Thus have we placed our *flaming Sword* (though God knows no *Cherubim*) at the gate of our Paradiſe, and when God calls all men to the *waters of life*, our Contentions have made them like *thoſe of Marah*, ſo bitter and unpleaſant, as deters and averts men from them: Which as it is in the higheſt degree injurious to them, ſo is it contumelious to *him*, whoſe invitations are by this means fruſtrated; 'tis in ſome degree the evacuating one of the main *purpoſes* of Chriſt's coming into the World, which was to *call men out of darkneſs into his marvelous light*, and as *He* was thus ſent by his Father, ſo alſo were the *Apoſtles* ſolemnly commiſſionated by him to preach to the Gentile world, who with indefatigable induſtry and reſolute ſufferings purſued the *charge*; and ſure this is competent evidence, that the deſign was of the greateſt and moſt weighty importance, and ſuch as can never be out-dated,

till there ceaſe to be objects of it, unbelievers to convert: And by that let us meaſure the guilt of obſtructing it, which if we would impartially do, I aſſure my ſelf the moſt *paſſionate Bigot* of any Party muſt confeſs, that it infinitely out-weighs all the Piety his doctrine can pretend to, that his *peculiar* Church gains not ſo much as the *Catholick* loſes: And that how confidently ſoever he hath Canoniz'd his quarrels, they are indeed but the worſt ſort of Heathens, and ſerve to keep out the better. Yet beſides the Miſchiefs they do in relation to thoſe that are *without*, they are extremely pernicious to thoſe that are *within*, and that not only to ſome *one Sect*, but like an *univerſal Poiſon*, that is equally deadly to the moſt contrary complexions, they operate on the moſt diſtant ranks of Profeſſors, the *tender* and the *obdurate*, the *ſcrupulous* and the *prophane*. And firſt for the tender tremulous Chriſtian, 'tis eaſie to diſcern how much he muſt be diſtracted and amaz'd by them; for while he hears each Sect thunder out *Damnation* againſt each other, he cannot but be ſtartled at the *danger* of adh ring to the *wrong*, and though that may a while excite his diligence to diſcover the *right*, yet when he comes to that inquiſition, he will meet with ſo many *Polemick Intricacies* to entangle him, that after many turns, firſt to one ſide, and then to another, he will be apt to think the only *clue* to extricate him out of this *labyrinth* of many Religions, *is to abandon all*. Nor is this *mere ſpeculation* and *Conjecture*, God knows we have had ſucceſſively through

through the whole round of Error too many *practick experiments* of it. Several perſons there have been, whoſe Zeal to find out *Truth* by an unhappy rule of *Falſe*, directed them to allow of *every Error*: While like *ſick men*, who deſire to die good-cheap, they put themſelves into the hands of any *Empirick*, follow each bold pretender, that has the impudence to talk of Truth, till Superſtition ends in Profanation, *Godlineſs* proves *Atheiſm*, and by having been of *many Sects*, at laſt have *no Religion*. And ſurely this is a moſt unhappy effect of our diſcords, thus to be *ſtumbling-blocks* in our Brother's way, and when we remember the woes pronounc'd againſt thoſe that ſhall Scandalize any of the little ones, 'twill be ſtrange how men can think to approve their *Chriſtianity*, by the ruine of their Brothers, or ſecure themſelves of *Heaven* by keeping others thence: For though Chriſt tells his Diſciples there ſhould be ſome that ſhould think it a *ſervice* to God *to kill their Bodies*, yet to phancy the *deſtroying of Souls* ſo too, is a Deception of which we have neither *record* nor *perdition* in Holy Writ, and is a ſuperfetation of the Spirit of Deluſion, peculiar to thoſe who have placed their own ſanctity in theſe religious wranglings, which ſerve to deſtroy it in other men. And as they thus ſerve on the one ſide to ſhipwrack the *faith* of theſe weak unſtable Souls; ſo do they on the other advance the *impiety* of the daring ſinner; for as they are Temptations to the *one*, ſo are they Pretence and Excuſe to the *other* to bid defiance to all Religion. He

whoſe diſſolute *affections* have ſo long been courting his *underſtanding* to turn Atheiſt, will ſure not loſe the advantage of ſo plauſible an argument as our *diviſions* afford him; and ſince his *luſts* engage him in an irreconcileable War againſt the *practick part* of Piety, he will moſt gladly embrace this occaſion of quarrel againſt the *Theory* alſo: So making himſelf entire, and extinguiſhing thoſe uneaſie regrets and miſgivings ariſing from the repugnancy of his *life* to his *belief*. It were not hard to give a *compendium* of theſe mens *Logick*, and draw out thoſe *Schemes* of Diſcourſe, by which from our *differences* in Religion they infer the *diſcarding* of all. But I fear theſe are already too well known, and where they are not, I ſhould be loth to be any mans Inſtructor. This is I am ſure too palpable, that how *fallacious* ſoever theſe reaſonings are, they have been very *operative*, as appears by the number of thoſe *avowed Atheiſts* among us, who placing themſelves *in the ſeat of the ſcorner*, give themſelves much pleaſing Divertiſement by *deriding* our eager *ſcuffles* about that which they think nothing. If any man thinks that the *Church* is no loſer by the defection of ſuch *Libertines*, I muſt be allowed to diſſent from him: For firſt there are examples of the moſt vicious Perſons, that have been reduced, and while they retain their Chriſtian *belief*, that lays ſuch undeniable obligations to good *life*, that whenever they reſume their *reaſon*, they muſt take up *vertue* alſo with it; ſo that there is an equal poſſibility of their being *good*, that there

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is of their being *rational*: But when all hope and fear of a future eſtate is diſclaim'd, when thoſe cords are broken which ſhould pull them up from the Dungeon, then, and not before is their ſtate viſibly deſperate. But beſides this poſſibility of *recovering them*, the danger of *loſing others* is to be conſidered. Bold *Atheiſm* is like a raging *Peſtilence*, which taints the very *Air*, ſo that thoſe impious *diſcourſings* which are the *effects* of ſome mens Vices, may be the *cauſe* of others; and we too often ſee that thoſe who aſcended themſelves *by degrees*, do *in an inſtant* advance their *Proſelytes* to the height of Irreligion, as appears by the ſtrange proficiency of ſome, whoſe years allow them not to have arrived to it otherwiſe than *per Saltum*. And ſure this ſpreading Contagion has been ſo deſtructive to the Church, that it were to be wiſht, the mere titular Chriſtians had rather remain'd ſuch, than thus to have averted others from being ſo much.

AND now if all theſe ſcandals be worth our regret, if the emboldening and exaſperating the *bad*, the corrupting the *innocent*, and the decay of Chriſtian *profeſſion* conſequent to both, be *formidable Evils*, we know where to charge the *guilt*. Our *contentions* muſt be arraign'd as *acceſſaries* if not *principals* in the caſe: And then ſure it will befit our angry Zealots to conſider, whether this be the way of *advancing God's Truth*, *or what account they will give to the Lord of the Vineyard*, who while they pretend to dreſs and prune the *branches*, do thus debilitate and deſtroy the *roots*.

Nay, indeed in this they are treacherous even to their own pretenſions, for all thoſe ſeveral Religions which they ſo tenderly cheriſh, have no *proper root* of their own, but like Excreſcencies, ſpring out of the *main ſtock* of Chriſtianity, live by its juice and moiſture, and conſequently, can never hope to ſurvive it. And then certainly, there can be nothing more ridiculous, than to expreſs their kindneſs to the *one*, by ways that are ſo ruinous to the *other*. 'Tis as if a *Paſſenger* in a ſhip ſhould, to fortifie his *private Cabin*, tear up the *planks* and expoſe the whole Veſſel to ſinking: Yet thus prepoſterouſly do many of our *chief Pilots* apply their care. In the mean time, it cannot but be a very *delightful proſpect* to the grand Enemy of Souls, to ſee us thus buſily promote his *intereſt*, lay *ſnares* for our ſelves, and by our own *folly* do that which all his *ſubtilties* could never compaſs. Nor can we think but he will be as *officious* to us as is poſſible, while we are thus employed, will help us to contrive our *Turrets*, whilſt he ſees we pluck out *ſtones* from the *foundation* to build them with; nor ſhall we ever want *new models* of Churches, ſo long as they thus help to deſtroy the *old*; and how aptly they are fitted for that Purpoſe, needs (I ſuppoſe) no farther Demonſtration.

CHAP.

## CHAP. XII.

### *A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Diſputes, in reference to Civil Peace.*

AND now ſure we cannot but conclude our *Contentions* highly injurious to *Chriſtianity*, that thus aſſault it both in the *Practick* and *Theory*: And indeed how fierce ſoever our quarrels are with one another, the heavieſt blows are ſure to fall on that, which as in its conſtitution is of the moſt Pacifick temper imaginable, ſo it has the common fate of reconcilers to ſuffer from all parties. But *Godlineſs having the promiſe as well of this life as of that which is to come*, it often happens that there is ſuch a conſent between our *ſpiritual* and *ſecular* Concerns, that the Miſchiefs that oppreſs the *one* do reflect on the *other*: And indeed Religion when intire and united, is one of the beſt bonds of *Civil* as well as *Eccleſiaſtical* Peace, (as even thoſe atteſt, who defying all other ends of it, do yet admit it a uſeful State Engine;) from whence 'tis conſequent, that the *diſtractions* and *diviſions* in that muſt have proportionably a contrary influence, and infect *Communities* with Diſcord, Tumult and Diſorders. And this is an *effect* with which I think not unfit to bring up the *rear* of the foregoing Miſchiefs, it being not ſo purely Secular, as not to

ſuit our preſent ſubject; for *outward order* and *unity* can never be ſo innocently diſturb'd, but that *Chriſtianity* muſt be wounded in it alſo: And beſides, it may perhaps obtain more conſideration than the former, as being of a nature wherein the generality of men will think themſelves the moſt concern'd; for though there be many that can look on the ruine both of Chriſtian practice and profeſſion, with *Gallio*'s indifference, *Acts* 18.17. and care for none of thoſe things, yet when the ſiege draws cloſer, when they find themſelves begirt in their worldly intereſts, and that the ſame Deluge that overwhelms *Churches*, may bear down *Palaces* alſo, perhaps they may think the matter not ſo contemptible. And firſt, as to the truth of the obſervation, the *World* has too long groaned under the *Experiment* to need farther proof. That *bitterneſs* which firſt tainted the *waters of the Sanctuary*, hath from thence diffus'd it ſelf into our *common ſtreams*, and like the *Ægyptian Plague*, left none uncorrupted: For whether we look upon Families, Neighbourhoods, Kingdoms, any the *leaſt*, or any the *greateſt* Societies, we find the miſerable *Trophies* of our *Holy Wars*, in Factions and Confuſions; I wiſh I could not ſay Rapine and Blood alſo. For the *firſt* of theſe, the domeſtick Jars caus'd by different Opinions, the *Inſtances* are numerous, or rather innumerable, which our own *age* and *nation* afford us. How many Servants have on this ſcore been at defiance with their Maſters? Children with their Parents? Nay, Wives with their

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Husbands? Such an unhappy force is there in *miſtaken Zeal*, that it diſſolves the *cloſeſt bonds*, violates all *obligations* natural or civil, while under pretence of ſervice to God, like the *Phariſee's* Corban, it evacuates all duty to man? and this has made ſuch ruptures and diviſions in Families, that that delightful proſpect the *Pſalmiſt* ſo much commends, that of *Brethrens dwelling together in unity*, *Pſalm* 133. is ſcarce any where to be met with; but inſtead of that, ſuch rancour and bitterneſs, treachery and malice, as if men either miſtook Chriſt's *prediction*, *Luke* 12. 52. for a *precept*, or at leaſt were willing to advance his *Prophetick* Office upon the ruine of his *Kingly*, and to verifie his *preſage* by breaking his *command*. And as the œconomical order and peace is thus diſturb'd, ſo if he that miſſes quiet *at home* ſhould ſeek for it *abroad*, he will ſoon find himſelf diſappointed, and diſcern that as the *ſocieties* grow greater, ſo do the *diſorders* alſo, and that private ſtrifes do as much combine to make *parties* and *factions*, as families do to make *Cities* and *Corporations*. By this means that mutual communication, by which the Members of civil bodies ſhould not only benefit one another, but ſecure the whole, is interrupted, and men live not as *neighbours*, but *ſpies*, always upon deſigns of Entrapping and Enſnaring; for while they look on one another as *Enemies to God*, they think that reſcinds all obligations of *Friendſhip among themſelves*, and when Religion bears the *Standard*, the *War* will be concluded neceſſary and honourable

able. But though it be ſo in *imagination only*, 'tis ſure there are ſome, who make it *really profitable*; for as in moſt *Camps*, the greater number are attracted rather by hope of *booty* than concern for the *cauſe*; ſo here, many men *liſt* themſelves under one Party, that they may have pretence to *prey* upon the reſt. And to that End ſeveral very commodious *Axioms* have been taken up. As *That no Faith is to be kept with Hereticks*; *That Dominion is founded in Grace*, &c. By ſuch meaſures as theſe the goods of the *Egyptians* become lawful prizes to any, that pleaſe to call themſelves *Iſraelites*; and indeed *Jews* they may be call'd in that notion we vulgarly uſe it of *unjuſt* and *cruel extortioner*: But ſure not ſuch *Iſraelites* as Chriſt defines *Nathanael*, *Joh.* 1. 47. *without guile*: For having thus conſecrated their frauds, and found an expedient of ſerving *God* and *Mammon* together, there is no piece of *deceit* either too big, or too little for them; no tranſaction ſo important, which can oblige their *fidelity*; none ſo trivial as to diſcourage their *rapine*: Opportunity is the only meaſure and rule of their *attempts*, by this means no *Obligation* of Contract, no *Laws* of Commerce can eſcape unviolated; every thing is lawful that may weaken the wicked, and that *zeal* which makes men *Saints* in the Church or Conventicle can make them *Thieves* in the Shop or Market. Thus is Piety made an Engine of rapine, and by theſe *religious riots*, all *boundaries* wherewith Laws or Equity have ſenc'd mens diſtinct *properties*, are thrown down: And ſure this

this is a moſt carnal conſequent of our ſpiritual debates, and bids fair towards the reducing us to that ſtate of common Hoſtility, which ſome have phancied to be the *Original condition* of mankind: For it renders commerce ſo dangerous, that men may within a while think it ſafer to truſt their own *ſtrengths*, than to the ſhelter of thoſe *Laws* and *Civil compacts*, which they ſee ſo avowedly evacuated. And upon this account, though the Injury be immediately done to *private* perſons, it becomes a *publick* miſchief: yet alas, theſe are but the more moderate *effects* of our Diſſentions; they afford more expedite and compendious ways of publick ruine; the *defrauding* or *undermining* of a few Neighbours, are *petty prizes* for thoſe that think they have the ſole right to the Creature, and are thoſe *Meek* who are to *inherit the Earth*, and every ſuch acqueſt only ſerves to fleſh them for a farther chaſe. The *ſpoils* of a broken Kingdom will afford ſomething worth the *ſcrambling* for: And nothing more fit to *break it* than a pretence of Religion, which like the *ſtone* that ſmote *Nebuchadnezzar*'s Image, has ſhivered the moſt goodly Monarchies. And accordingly, we ſee no *Engine* is more conſtantly us'd by men of ſeditious Spirits, to diſturb and ſubvert Governments: Indeed there can be nothing ſo advantageouſly fitted for the purpoſe. For ſhould ſuch perſons unmask their deſign, and ſhew it in its *native uglineſs*, ſhould they avow the ſhaking of a *Kingdom* merely to eſtabliſh themſelves in a condition of *wealth* and *grandeur*, the new moulding

moulding of a Government only that they might ſhape their own ſhares in it, 'twere impoſſible they ſhould find any abettors; for though the *multitude* are always in preparation for *change*, yet 'tis not on Intuition of benefit to ſome *private perſons*, but of ſomewhat wherein *themſelves* may partake: Nor is even the madneſs of the people mad enough, to expoſe all their *own intereſt*, and moſt important concerns, only to promote *thoſe of others*. It has therefore always been both the rule and practice for ſuch deſigners to ſuborn the *publick Intereſt* to countenance and cover their *private*; to cry up *Diana* to ſecure their own *gain*, and to make the ſeduced *Populacy* like the *Jackcal* to the *Lion*, hunt that prey which themſelves mean to devour. And of all thoſe artifices by which ſuch *Incendiaries* have ſet Kingdoms in a *flame*, none has been more univerſally ſucceſsful than the *pretext* of Religion, which is thought ſo *creditable a cauſe* to engage in, as can convert the *infamous Titles* of Rebel and Traitor into thoſe of Patriot and Saint, and conſequently, take off all diſcouragement ariſing from the diſreputation of ſuch an enterprize: And no leſs potent is it in ſolving the ſcruples of its unlawfulneſs; for by a dextrous anticipation, it makes Conſcience a *party*, that it may exclude it from being *judge*, and by that one fallacy of ſuppoſing *Religion* to be *a juſt ground of quarrel*, make way for all the wild conſequences deducible from that *falſe principle*: And indeed where that is throughly faſtned, the *Miſchiefs* are not only *great* but *uncurable*, and yet the

the more ſo by how much the perſon is more zealous. For alas, what will it avail to tell ſuch a man, 'tis a ſin to *fight againſt his King*: when he will tell you 'tis a greater not to *fight for his God*: That he contracts a *heinous* guilt in violating the *peace* of the Church, when he with as great confidence believes, he *merits* in propagating its *truth*. That he is accountable for the *blood* of his Brethren; when he thinks he has like the *Levites*, *Exod.* 32. conſecrated himſelf in it, and offer'd it an acceptable *ſacrifice* to God. Thus unhappily are theſe men fortified in their *ſin*, by preſuming it their *Vertue*, and while the *furious zeal* of ſuch is made ſubſervient to the *wicked craft* of others, 'tis a moſt *apt inſtrument* of publick Miſchief, there being no attempt ſo deſperate, which ſuch may not be put upon, who are methinks us'd, as *Hannibal* is ſaid to have done thoſe Oxen, whoſe *horns* he firſt fired, and then ſent them to diſturb'd the *Roman* camp: Theſe men as thoſe *beaſts* are found very uſeful for the moleſting of others; but commonly all they acquire to themſelves, is the *ſmart* of their own *flames*. Few of thoſe who thus in the ſimplicity of their heart follow an *Abſalom* or a *Sheba*, that do not either miſcarry together with the *deſign*, or elſe live to diſcern how much their *credulity* was abuſed; and that both *religion* (however pretended) and *thoſe* that fought for it, were only made *properties* to promote the *luſts of thoſe* who deſpiſed both. But 'tis unneceſſary to inſiſt farther on the *effects* of ſuch religious Fury, of which *we of this Nation* have had ſo many and ſo *coſtly* evidences,

*ces*, as far tranſcend the moſt *tragical deſcriptions*. God grant we may never have other than our *paſt experiences* to meaſure them by: But certainly there is little reaſon to be ſecure, ſo long as the *root* of them, our *ſpeculative differences* daily encreaſe; for unleſs we could ſuppoſe an Age of ſuch innocence, that there ſhould be none who would *take* any undue Advantages, 'tis ſure there will be enough *given*: And indeed when we reflect upon our paſt Diſtractions, and conſider how trivial the *matter* of moſt of thoſe debates was, whoſe *manner* has been ſo cruelly ſolemn; how our ſlighteſt *problems* have been writ in *blood*, that many Thouſands have been made *naked* to keep the *Surplice off* a few mens backs, and we have pulled down our Churches in diſpleaſure at the *windows*; when I ſay theſe and a Thouſand the like are conſidered, we muſt conclude that there can never *want* Occaſion to them that (in the *Apoſtle*'s Phraſe) *deſire* Occaſion: The *lighteſt diſtempers* in the Church being *contagious*, and moſt apt (when fomented by ambitious deſigners) to beget an *univerſal Plague* in the Common-wealth. And now who can without horror conſider theſe miſerably perverted *effects* of Chriſtian Religion, that *that* which was deſign'd the moſt *inviolable bond of unity*, ſhould like thoſe curles of entangled Snakes with which *Erinnys* is ſaid to have infuriated *Athemas* and *Ino*, become the *fatal incendiary of the mortalleſt hatred*. That *that Oeconomy* which was meant to *regulate*, ſhould be the Inſtrument of *confounding* and *embroiling* the World; and

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a *Goſpel of Peace* ſhould thus be made the *Incentive to War*, and create fiercer quarrels than thoſe it was to have compos'd. To *turn the Grace of God into wantonneſs*, is juſtly branded as a *great* Crime, but ſure to turn it *into malice* is yet a *greater*. And though every ſin offers violence to our Religion, yet *this* is of all others the moſt *barbarous*, thus to make it aſſaſſinate it ſelf, become a kind of *Felo de ſe*, and contribute to its own ruine. And that this is the caſe, is I preſume ſufficiently evident in all the *foregoing inſtances*, which as they are moſt obviouſly the *effect* of our eager Diſputes, ſo are they no leſs viſibly *deſtructive* to Chriſtianity in all its intereſts, leave it neither *root* nor *branch*, neither *inward* Vigour, nor *outward* Luſtre; ſo at once rendring it both infertile and unamiable. 'Twas a piece of hoſtile Severity againſt *Moab*, *to fill the land with ſtones, thereby to render it barren*, 2 *Kin.* 3.25. The ſlingers went about, and ſmote it: but what *that* ſuffered from *profeſt Enemies*, the *Church* daily ſuſtains from thoſe that call themſelves her beſt *friends*. Our *Benjamites* are ſo in love with their skill of ſlinging to a hairs breadth, their nice Criticiſms, Diſtinctions, and Subtilties, have caſt abroad ſo many *ſtones of contention*, that the Church is become perfect *quarry*, utterly *ſteril* and *unfruitful*, as to all thoſe good works for the production whereof ſhe was ſo peculiarly fenced and cultivated by God; nay, 'twere well if *barrenneſs* were the worſt, and that ſhe had not on the other ſide acquir'd an unhappy

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*degenerous fertility:* But what a numerous and accurſed Iſſue ſpring from this unpeaceable temper, the foregoing conſiderations do too ſadly demonſtrate; and I doubt not every attentive Obſerver will be able to add *more* (though not *truer*) Inſtances; and beſides to diſcern that this *ſpurious brood* like that of *Hagar* is grown ſo wantonly inſolent as to deſpiſe the *right heir* of the Promiſe. The true *Goſpel-Graces* of Meekneſs, Peaceableneſs and univerſal Charity are accounted *Earthly Phelgmatick qualities*, we diſclaim the *Holy Ghoſt* which deſcends in the appearance of the *Dove*, nay, or in *Fire* either, unleſs it be like that of *Elijah*, to conſume all that diſguſt us; nor do we meaſure our *Religion* ſo much, by the oppoſition it makes to our *Luſts*, as to thoſe whom we firſt make, and then call our *Enemies*. Thus miſerably have we chang'd the Scene, and by *calling evil good, and good evil*, have accumulated injuries upon our oppreſſed Chriſtianity, not only robb'd it of its *rule*, but of its *reputation* alſo. And do we daily thus ſee *Iſhmael* mocking *Iſaac*, and ſhall we not think it time to caſt out the Bond-woman and her Son? Shall we for ever cheriſh this Generation of *Vipers* to tear out the *bowels* of our common Mother? I pray God the Queſtion have not as much of *preſage* as *expoſtulation*. For if we conſider the preſent ſtate of things, how our *contentions* plead not only *right* but *preſcription*, there ſeems not much hope of diſpoſſeſſing them, and yet leſs, when 'tis remembred, how they have entwiſted themſelves,

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not only with the *paſſions*, but *intereſts* of men; two ſuch *potent Abettors* as will buoy up the moſt *forlorn cauſe*. The truth is, there are many *ſubterraneous ſprings* which feed *this Ocean*, and though religion and piety be on all hands demurely pretended, yet as we have ſeen the *effects* of our debates very *diſconſonant* to ſuch a Profeſſion; ſo if we examine the *originals* and *cauſes*, we ſhall find them for the moſt part as *widely diſtant*. It may not be amiſs to take a ſhort view of ſome of them; for though I cannot hope the *diſcovery* of the Cauſes will contribute to the *general cure*, yet perhaps it may prove *Antidote* to ſome particular perſons, who will be the leſs apt to admire the verdure of the *leaves* (the flouriſhing appearances of *zeal* and *piety*) when they find both *fruit* and *root* of ſo poiſonous a quality.

## CHAP. XIII.

*A Survey of the Cauſes of Diſputes; and firſt, Pride.*

AND in this inqueſt we find Pride already arraigned to our hands, by the wiſeſt of Men, *Prov.* 13. 10. *Only by pride cometh contention.* It is indeed a moſt prolifick vice, and there are few *ſins* to which it is not either a *parent* or *nurſe*: but there is ſcarce any

which does more betray its immediate deſcent from it than this of *ſtrife* and *debate*, which has ſo many of the *lineaments* and *features* of the deform'd Mother, as ſufficiently atteſt its *extraction*. And as this is true of *all* ſtrifes in general, ſo particularly of *thoſe* whereof we now treat: For Pride being it ſelf an internal ſin, it has ſuch a neighbourhood with all the notions and ſpeculations of the mind, that it eaſily makes impreſſions on them: Nor are we to wonder that the Sacredneſs of divine things is not *Amulet* enough againſt its *Charms*, when we remember that the *firſt act* of Pride that ever was committed, was levelled even *at God* himſelf; and as it took up its firſt ſeat in a ſpiritual ſubſtance, ſo has it ever ſince, never acted more *naturally*, and therefore more *vigorouſly*, than about ſpiritual matters. Of this the Church in all ages has had many coſtly Experiments; for if we trace the Catalogues of Hereſies from *Simon Magus* his days down to our own, we ſhall find Pride a *principal Actor* in every *Scene*, though perhaps in *various dreſſes*. For though Pride be always in the general an affectation of ſome tranſcendency, yet it differs as to the particular object, according to the ſeveral eſtimates men make of excellencies. So that the *propugners* of new Opinions, though they have this *common aim*, that they ſeek their *own exaltation*, yet do not always do it in the *ſame inſtances*. For example, *ſome* have coveted the repute of *profound Inquiſitors*, and this Vanity has prompted them to dive ſo deep into the

the *bowels* of every the *plaineſt doctrine*, till at laſt they have twiſted and entangled them into the moſt *perplexing difficulties*. Theſe *Navigators* think they have never ſail'd ſucceſsfully, till they have found out a *Terra incognita*, though God knows they bring nothing from thence for the benefit of the habitable world; nor make it their buſineſs to *reſolve* Doubts, but *ſtart* them. *Another ſort* of men there are of ſo faſtidious and petulant wits, that they diſdain an *opinion* of which themſelves are not the *Authors*; they love not to have their underſtandings preſcrib'd to by the preconceptions of others, how divinely ſoever inſpir'd, and will rather have a Religion of their *own making* than of *his* whom they pretend to worſhip. And this, 'tis to be doubted, is the bottom of the great *veneration* ſome have paid to *Reaſon*, which they have ſet up in the *Throne*, not only in defiance of *blind implicit aſſent*, but even of *divine revelation*. But in the mean time 'tis to be obſerv'd that 'tis not reaſon *in general*, the common excellency of our nature that is thus advanc'd, but every man's own *private* and *individual*; which upon a juſt ſcanning will often be found the moſt diſtant thing from what it is call'd; *Paſſion* and *Phancy*, by that omnipotent advantage of being a man's own, often paſſing for *deep diſcourſe* and *ratiocination*: and what a fruitful harveſt of Tares ſuch ſeed is apt to produce, our *reaſon* would inform us, if our *experience* did not. To theſe we may add *another rank* of men, who vehemently thirſting after a *name* in the

world, hope to acquire that by being the *diſſeminators* of *novel doctrines*; they think while they go on in the *beaten tract*, they ſhall be obſcur'd in the *Throng*; the only way to make themſelves conſpicuous is to be ſingular: Thus fondly chuſing to be eminent, though by the infamous Characters of *Heretick* or *Schiſmatick*, and (like him that fired *Diana*'s Temple to ſecure himſelf from oblivion) build themſelves *Monuments* of the *Churches ruine*: and ſure this *Theudas* his ambition of being ſome body, has helpt to raiſe more *opinions* than he did *men*. Yet commonly it anſwers it even in that circumſtance alſo; for when by *ſeparating themſelves* from the *unity of the faith*, they have rendred themſelves remarkable, their next aim is to have *others joyn* to them; and ſo they may have the honour of being *leaders*, care not though it be into the ditch. To be call'd of men *Rabbi*, *Rabbi*, is enchanting Muſick to any *Phariſee*, and ſerves like the Timbrels in *Tophet* to drown the cries not of their *Children*, but *Mothers* ſcorching in the flames of their contention. Indeed ſo impetuous and uncontroulable is this kind of *vanity*, that like a mighty torrent, it beats down all before it, overwhelms not only the oppoſite *virtues*, but even all *vices* that are not of its own confederacy. Men can in this caſe ay ſevere reſtraints upon their moſt *intimate ſenſualities*, when they ſuſpect them *treacherous* to this grand Deſign. The *Wolf* ſhall be muzled and made to behave himſelf with the meekneſs becoming the *Sheeps* cloathing. The *Swine* ſhall

ſhall be waſht, and by an unnatural violence withheld from the *mire:* All their rapacious and beſtial *appetites* controul'd and made tame, that they worry not their *reputation.* And all this for a little naked *popularity*, for whoſe dear purchaſe, very many have thought fit to diveſt themſelves, both of lawful and unlawful *enjoyments*; and have thought the tumultuous *applauſe* of a few factious ſpirits worth all that *ſelf-denial.* But all Pride is not ſo perfectly *Chamelion* as to ſubſiſt upon this *mere air*, there is another kind of it that propoſes to it ſelf ſomething beyond this: ſuch is the affectation of rule and dominion, which though in reſpect of any real good to the ruler, is as very a *Chimæra* as the former; yet commonly they that are under ſuch a *Juriſdiction*, find to their coſt 'tis more than *imaginative.* And God knows this *aſpiring humour* has been no leſs fatally active in *Eccleſiaſtick* than in *Civil* affairs; nor has the Church ever been in more danger of *Anarchy* than by *thoſe* who moſt impatiently coveted a ſhare in its Government; for where this ſpirit of Ambition is the Impellent, it does like the *Demoniack* in the Goſpel, burſt aſunder all *fetters* and *chains*, violates the unity both of doctrine and diſcipline, nor is any attempt too bold for men thus animated: They who long to be in authority think the *door* opens not quick enough for their entry, and impatient of ſo tedious an expectation, chuſe rather to make breaches in the *walls* (nay ſometimes to undermine the *foundation*) than to want an *acceſs* to

their Deſires. Neither is there any thing ſo ſacred, which upon this occaſion they cannot proſtitute; when *Diotrephes*, 3 *Joh.* 9. ſeeks prehemi-nence, the dictates even of an *Apoſtle* ſhall be rejected; and even the Divinity of *Chriſt*, *God bleſſed for ever*, be trampled on, when *Arius* wants a footſtool to climb up to his affected greatneſs. In a word, if we examine the occurrencies of all ages, we ſhall find that either the eagerneſs of *acquiring*, or the revenge of *miſſing dignities*, have been the great *inſtigators* of Eccleſiaſtick Feuds; and ſure our *Modern* ſtories, are not likely to fall ſhort of the *Ancient*, in examples of this kind. And as Pride makes *ſome* thus paſſionately deſirous of rule, ſo it makes *others* as impatient of being ruled, and even thoſe who cannot hope to arrive to *give* Laws, will not endure to be *under* thoſe already eſtabliſhed. That *this* is indeed the Chriſtian *liberty* for which many in our days have ſo unchriſtianly contended, is too apparent, the *fundamental quarrel* has been againſt *ſubjection*: Yet to countenance and abet that, whole armies of frivolous cavils have been rais'd, and the *Church* attacqued in every its remoteſt concern; and though there be nothing farther from that unity of mind, to which the ſimile was firſt affixt, yet in a perverſe ſence it imitates the *Ointment of Aaron* in *deſcending from the head to the skirts of the cloathing*: not only the *ſupreme* and *more eminent parts*, but the moſt *ſlight extrinſick* and *inferior relatives* to Religion being aſperſt and depraved; and the moſt *innocent* circumſtances

cumſtances of Civil or Natural actions made *criminal*, when applied to Divine Things. A ſtrange *ineffective power*, which theſe men have conveyed into God's ſervice, that it muſt thus pollute every thing that approaches it. That the *place* where his Honour dwells, muſt become a *Peſthouſe*, and diffuſe *contagion* to all in it: (I wiſh by the way their *Sacrilege* had not been too valiant in deſpiſing the Danger of thoſe *infected utenſils*, which may perhaps ſadly verifie the reproach, and prove *treacherous prizes*.) And when mens *zeal* operates thus unkindly, when the pretence of *internal ſanctity* devours all *outward decency*, and *God* is to be honoured and exalted by thoſe ways, whereby *men* would think themſelves affronted, and viliſied; we have too great reaſon to think ſuch a zeal as little according to *godlineſs* as *knowledge*, and that it is not ſo much the *tenderneſs* of their Conſciences, no nor generally the *weakneſs* of their Brains, but the *Iron ſinew* in their Necks, which makes them at once ſo ſcrupulous, and ſo clamorous; for though the *former* might be ſuppos'd owing to Error, the *later* can ſurely proceed from nothing but Pride. Several other inſtances might be given to ſhew how that pernicious temper has contributed to the riſe and firſt being of our diviſions; and having thus given them birth, it does not like the *Oſtrich* abandon its brood, but has as great an influence in the *cheriſhing* and *maintaining*, as it had in *creating* them. Of this there need no other proof than the mere *nature* of Pride, which as it

averts nothing more than *ſelf condemnation*; ſo upon pain of that appearance, 'tis irreverſibly engag'd in the purſuit of its firſt undertakings, any *deſiſting* being interpretatively a *confeſſion* either of an error or a defeat, both which are inſupportable to an aſſuming temper: So that beſides the *original incentives* forementioned, it has this of *diſdain* ſuperadded to actuate its motions. And accordingly we find they are at this rebound the more violent, not only the *ſucceſs*, but the *credit* of the firſt enterprize depending upon a vigorous proſecution: So that *Catiline*'s Maxim of *Villany* ſeems to have been adopted into ſome mens *divinity*, and they think paſt crimes are only to be ſecur'd by more and greater. Nor is it only *hope* to atchieve their *deſign*, or hide their *ſhame* which thus animates them, *deſpair* will do it to a yet higher degree. Our Concupiſcible and Iraſcible appetites dwell not ſo remote, but they are ready reſerves to one another, and what was *deſire* in the purſuit, becomes *anger* and *revenge* in the diſappointment; and ſure we need not to be told the wild effects of thoſe paſſions. How many men have in a *furious deſpair* over acted even their own *projects*, and have made it a malicious conſolation in their ruine, to get it attended with that of the publick? As *Herod*, who to ſecure a *lamentation* at his death, commanded a *Maſſacre* ſhould accompany it, or (to give a more Eccleſiaſtical inſtance) like *Aerius*, who ſought the aboliſhing of that order in the Church, whereof himſelf could not partake. I wiſh no man's *Conſcience* in

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our days were qualified to ſuggeſt a freſher example. But whilſt 'tis ſo many ways the *intereſt* of Pride to abet our *contentions*, we cannot think it ſo ſluggiſh or uninduſtrious an *agent*, as not to find out *expedients* for its purpoſe. I ſhall not attempt to give a particular of its *inſtruments*, when I have ſaid that *Schiſm* is one of them, I need not add more, ſince that alone ſerves both to *complete* and *perpetuate* the miſchief of all our ſpeculative diſſentions. How cloſe a Band of concord the *communicating in holy duties* is, we may learn by *Jeroboam*, who ſeems ſo well to have underſtood its unitive efficacy, that he durſt not truſt the newly divided *Tribes* in a joynt reſort to the Temple; and therefore leſt the *rupture* he had made in the State ſhould cloſe again, he thinks it neceſſary to make *another* in the Church, and ſecure his defection from his *Prince*, by that from his *God*. But we need not borrow a *teſtimony* from that his impious *policy*, we have a more *authentick atteſtation* from the holy *Pſalmiſt*, who when he would deſcribe the *greateſt integrity*, exemplifies it by the *walking to the houſe of God as friends*, *Pſal.* 55. 14. And the *Apoſtle* goes yet higher, and from our common *participation* of the Euchariſt, infers not only our *union*, but our *incorporation*. *We being many are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread*, 1 *Cor.* 10. 17. And then ſure we may on the contrary conclude, that our *ſeparation* muſt have the quite diſtant effects; alienate our *affections*, and by that means ſtill more eſtrange our *Judgments*.

For

For beſides that 'tis natural to men to think they can never run far enough from that they begin to loath, they are in their own defence to amplifie the *differences*, that they may acquit themſelves from the *ſcandal* of a cauſeleſs ſeparation; and this God knows is the uſual Method among us, when we have broken *communion*, our only ſtudy is not how to *repair*, but *juſtifie it*. The adverſaries *Tenets* are rigorouſly ſcanned, new *Charges* exhibited, and the *Schiſm* defended upon thoſe later diſcoveries, which were no motives to the making it. And then ſure no man can doubt but this is a *proper way*, both to *multiply and Eternize diſputes*; and 'tis abundantly manifeſt, that vanity and elation of mind is the cauſe that Men thus prefer a *miſtaken reputation*, before their own *innocence*, or the Churches *peace*. Indeed if we throughly conſider it, we ſhall find *Pride* is one of the fatalleſt inſtruments of Exciſion, the *two-edg'd ſword* by which adverſe parties do mutually cut themſelves from one another. The very *elements* and *conſtitutive parts* of a Schiſmatick, being the *Eſteem of himſelf*, and the *Contempt of others*. *I am not as this Publican*, was, we know, the voice of the proud *Phariſee*, whoſe very name, ſignifies *ſeparation*, and our modern *Separatiſts* do but Echo the ſame note, when they pronounce all thoſe *Heretical* or *Carnal*, from whom they have withdrawn. Or perhaps they derive from a yet more ancient preſident, thoſe of whom the Prophet *Eſay* ſpeaks, *Eſay* 65. 5. which ſay, *Stand by thy ſelf, come not near me, for I am holier than thou*;

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an inſolent kind of language, which the *Cathars* in the *primitive times* did not more exactly tranſcribe, than many *Sects* of differing denominations have done in *ours*. But 'tis to be remembred, that while the *Phariſee* lookt ſo faſtidiouſly on the poor *Publican*, he renounc'd communion in prayers much more acceptable than his own; and thoſe *refined Zealots*, who fear'd *contagion* from the approach of their more innocent Brethren, could boldly venture on the *pollutions* of the moſt deteſtable Idolatries: And God knows the note has too ready an application in both inſtances. In the mean time 'tis a ſad contemplation that ſo much of that *zeal* which makes ſuch a gliſtering in the world, ſhall, when brought to the Touch, be found *adulterate*; that the tranſcendent *purity* men boaſt of, ſhould prove but a more ſublimated *wickedneſs*, and their *pretence* to ſpirituality be verified only in *ſpiritual pride*. Alas, is not the whole *circuit* of ſecular things wide enough to contain this *ſwelling humour*? Are there not *Pomps* and *Vanities* of the world enough to entertain this one *Luſt*, but muſt this *Moabite* be brought into the *Sanctuary*? Can we not be *elevated* enough unleſs we *trample upon* all that is holy, and make *Religion* Factor for our *Ambition*? We find ſome very confidently point out *Antichriſt* upon the ſtrength of this one predicted circumſtance, that he was to *ſit in the Temple of God*. But what need we travel beyond the *Alps* to find out that, which *every where* preſents it ſelf? Our Pride does too unhappily anſwer the deſcription; and though there

there is no inſtance wherein it can ceaſe to be *Antichriſtian*, yet ſurely it is more eminently ſo, when it thus uſurps *God's ſeat*, and rules in ſacred things. Would God the *pains* and *animoſity* which has been ſpent in diſcovering and reviling *other* Antichriſts, had been diverted to the pulling down of *this*, the labour would have been more effectual even to the immediate end of the Deſigners; for were this Pride *eradicated*, the Foundation of all Spiritual uſurpations were *undermin'd*. But alas, thoſe who exclaim the moſt loudly againſt all *foreign Tyranny* on their Conſciences, do obſequiouſly bow to this *inteſtine Uſurper*, make an entire dedition of themſelves, and ſubmit to the ſevereſt and ignobleſt *vaſſalage*. They have inveſted it with ſo abſolute and ſoveraign a power, that (as *Samuel* warns the *Iſraelites* of their King, 1 *Sam.* 8.) they are not to call any thing their own, when it is uſeful to its ſervice. All their powers, all their intereſts are devoted to it, and that not only to adorn its *pomp*, but to fight its *battels*. Men quarrel and contend till not only *themſelves*, but even *Chriſtianity* it ſelf expire in the conteſt. But if it be indeed certain that every *War* is ſo far unjuſtifiable, as are the *cauſes* of it, 'twill ſurely be a competent prejudice againſt our contentions, that our Pride is ſo much concern'd in them, which is ſo unchriſtian a *motive*, as all the *Holy water* wherewith men have ſprinkled it, can never baptize into a *cleanneſs*; all the *borrowed addreſſes* of Zeal and Sanctity, however they may *diſguiſe*, can never

*legitimate*

*legitimate* it. Thoſe arts of concealment may indeed add a *new guilt*, that of *Hypocriſie*, but can never expiate, no nor extenuate the *old*: And how *Saint-like a form* ſoever our *Vain-glory* puts on, it does but the more own its derivation from *him*, who can *transform himſelf into an Angel of light*, whoſe aſpirings have firſt ſubverted *himſelf*, and now go on to propagate both his Crime and Ruine to *us*; nor has he ever manag'd that *deſign* with more Art or Succeſs, than by thus making our Pride a *Partition-wall* to divide us from *one another*, and conſequently from *God* too; who being, as our Church ſtiles him, the *author of Peace* and *lover of Concord*, can never joyn himſelf with the *diſturbers of both*, but muſt neceſſarily be diſobliged by our Diſſentions and Schiſms.

## CHAP. XIV.

*A Survey of the Cauſes of Diſputes; Secondly, Curioſity.*

IF now we proceed farther in our enquiry we ſhall find, that another grand *incendiary* of our Diſputes is *Curioſity*: A vice which though in ſome reſpects it may be reckoned a *ſpecies* of the *former*, that of Pride, yet in others it admits a *diſtinct conſideration*. This is that baneſull *weed* which the Devil made a ſhift to ſteal even into *Paradiſe*, and which has ever ſince affected

fected the *richest soils*, the most pregnant and polite Wits; nor did it only eject *man* from thence, but it has improved the *original curse*, and multiplied those *briars* and *thorns* among which he was cast, yea, transplanted them from the *Earth*, where they could only raise the skin, into the *Brain*, where they pierce and torture the intellectual and immortal part of Man. Nay, farther, even that *sweat of his brows*, which was to extirpate them from the *ground*, serves but to water and cherish them in his mind; his very *industry* being in this case the extremest *ill husbandry*, and the more *pains* he takes, the farther he removes himself from all *real advantages* of his toil.

THERE are some parts of *Knowledge* which God has thought fit to seclude from us, to fence them not only as he did the interdicted *Tree*, by Precept and Commination, but with Difficulties and Impossibilities; make it not only our *sin* and danger, but our *Folly* and madness to attempt them. Of this kind are the Mysterious parts of our *Religion*, which he shews us as it were a far off to exercise our *faith* and *reverence*, but stoops them not to our *sense* and *disquisition*. These he has placed like the *Sun*, where they may influence, not annoy; warm, not scorch us. And would we still permit them to remain at that safe and wholesome *distance*, we should find none but *benign effects*; but so importunate are the instigations of Curiosity, that no *bounds* will keep us from the *Mount*: We will needs break through into the *thick darkness*, how dreadful soever the

*thunders*

*thunders* and *lightnings* are in the way. Like bold *Phaetons* we deſpiſe all *benefits* wherewith the Father of light and us can court us, unleſs we may guide his *Chariot*; and we moralize the *Fable* as well in the tragicalneſs of the *event*, as the inſolence of the *undertaking*; this unhappy curioſity having not only ruin'd many of the *inquiſitors*, but ſet the whole *world* alſo in a *conflagration*. Nor is this temerity more *fatal* in its Succeſs, than *impious* in its Foundation: For beſides that it is a direct *invaſion* of God's peculiar, and *violation* of his Command, it does evidently imply a *diſtruſt*, either of his Wiſdom or his Goodneſs; ſuppoſes him either ſo *ignorant* of the ſtrength of thoſe faculties himſelf has made, that he has aſſigned them unproportionable objects, and ſo they muſt have new work cut out for them by our ſelves; or elſe preſumes his *Eye evil* towards his own Creatures; that as the *Devil* once ſuggeſted to our *firſt Parents*, he fears the rivalry of poor mortals, and by an envious detention of ſome parts of felicity, like one that had been Bountiful only upon *ſurprize* and *incogitancy*, illiberally retracts and contradicts his *original deſign* of making Man completely happy. Nay, indeed this repreſents him unkind, not only to *us his created Images*, but even to that Eternal and expreſs image of his Perſon, *the Son of his boſom*, who may well be thought to have been as deſpiſed in *his Eyes*, as he was once in *ours*, *Eſay* 53. 3. if he have ſo cheaply expos'd him for their ſakes, to whom he denies any of thoſe *intellectual advantages*, which

difference

difference *them* from *Beaſts.* Thus wickedly curious are we, that rather than converſe with *vulgar ordinary things*, we create *prodigies*, put *new forms* upon him that is *unchangeable*, rob *divinity* of its moſt inſeparable *attribute*, and not only *diſobey* God, but *reproach* him. And then 'tis no wonder, if that which affords ſo little *glory* to God, hath no more *good will* for Men, and that which thus wars with *Heaven*, leave little peace on *Earth.* Indeed if we will be building our *Babels*, and thus aſſault *Omnipotence*, 'tis but juſt we ſhould have our *language confounded*, and that That *knowledge* for which we boldly attempt to riſle God's cabinet, ſhould like the *Coal* from the Altar, ſerve only to embroil and conſume the *ſacrilegious invaders.* Yet beſides what is owing to divine vengeance in the caſe, the thing has in it ſelf a proper, natural efficiency toward it; for when ſo many men are engag'd in a *blind ſearch*, 'tis not imaginable they ſhould all *ſtumble* upon the ſame Notions, and ſuppoſing them to fall upon *variety*, 'tis impoſſible but mens fond over-weening of their own conceits and petulant diſdains of others, will improve that *variety* into Oppoſition, and that *oppoſition* into ſet and ſolemn Feuds. And God knows the Church is too effectively acquainted with this *fatal gradation*, and can experimentally atteſt the *unhappy propriety* of this ſort of Curioſity towards the engendring of *diſcord* and *confuſion.*

BUT beſides this *higher* rank of things which God hath ſet ſo much *above* us, there are others

others of an *inferiour* ſort, as much *below* us, which are concealed from us, not for their *ſublimity*, but their *uſefulneſs*; for as God on the one hand remembers that we are but *fleſh*, unable to bear the nearer approaches of *divinity*, and ſo talks with us as once with *Moſes* through a cloud: So on the other he forgets not that *he breathed into us the breath of life*, a vital active ſpirit, whoſe motions he expects ſhould own the dignity of its *original*, and as it was it ſelf an *emanation* of the Eſſential Goodneſs, ſhould aim at only *real* and *ſolid good*, and not evaporate and exhauſt its powers in *mean* and *impertinent purſuits*. And upon this ſcore alſo, he has found it neceſſary to hide many things from us, not that they would *dazle*, but *miſemploy* our Eye; not *ſwallow* up our Underſtanding, but *divert* our Attention, from what is more important: Of this ſort are thoſe many thin *aerial ſpeculations*, the certain knowledge whereof would bring us no real advantage, make us at all the wiſer to Salvation; yet ſuch a value does our *inquiſitive Nature* ſet upon every thing for its being *hid*, that as if our Life were bound up with theſe Secrets, and all our Felicity dwelt in the ſhade of theſe receſſes, we purſue this ſearch with indefatigable *induſtry*, ranſack all corners with as great *diligence* as the *Woman* for her loſt piece of Silver, *Luke* 15. 8. And as if this were indeed the *treaſure* hid in the field, ſell *all* that we have, lay out our whole *ſelves* upon the *purchaſe*. Indeed he that ſhall conſider what ſolemn Diſquiſitions

there are upon the ſlighteſt, and inconſiderableſt Subjects, with what advertence and concern Queſtions of this kind are bandied in the World, muſt wonder how men can at once be ſo *ſerious* and ſo *trifling*; or that thoſe who can ſay *ſo much*, ſhould not once ask themſelves to what purpoſe they ſay *any thing*. Yet what multitudes of Men are there engag'd in ſuch caſes as this? When alas, the quarry is not worth half the toil, could it be gotten: but what *Solomon* ſays of the *ſluggard*, *Prov* 12. 27. That *he roſteth not that which he took in hunting*, is true of the contrary temper, theſe *over-buſie ſpirits* whoſe labour is their only reward, they hunt a *ſhaddow*, and chaſe the *wind*; and when they ſtrain to their utmoſt ſpeed, there is ſtill the wonted diſtance between *them* and their *aims*; all their eager purſuits bring them no acqueſt; but after they have traverſt ſo much *ground*, traced all the *mazes* that Learned Curioſity could contrive to perplex Men, and ſtudied to the wearineſs of the *fleſh*, if not to the quenching of the *Spirit* too, they are ſtill in the ſame *ignorance* from whence they ſet out, and 'twere well if they were alſo in the ſame *doubtfulneſs*: But the unhappineſs of it is, they acquire a *confidence* without any *true ground* of it; and get ſuch a Knowledge as may *puff up*, but not *edifie*. This was eminently exemplified in the *Gnoſticks* of old, whoſe vain *Chimæras*, and *fooliſh queſtions*, as the *Apoſtle* calls them, *Tit.* 3. 9. paſt with them for ſuch a *ſuperlative wiſdom*, as gave them inſolence to diſcriminate themſelves from

from others by that ſwelling *Title*, and monopolize the reputation of *Science*, which yet if we will believe the great Doctor of the *Gentiles*, and he too brought up at the feet of *Gamaliel*, the greateſt *Rabbi* of the *Jews*, was *Science* falſly ſo called. And God knows, they want not ſucceſſors in this as well as in other particulars; Men are ſo poſſeſt with their own *Phancies*, that they take them for *Oracles*, and think they ſee viſions, and are arrived to ſome extraordinary *revelations* of Truth, when indeed they do but dream *dreams*, and amuſe themſelves with the Phantaſtick *Ideas* of a buſie imagination. Yet would they only pleaſe themſelves in the deluſion, the Phrenſie were more innocent; but like the prouder ſort of *Lunaticks*, they will needs be *Kings* and *Rulers*, impoſe their wild *conjectures* for *Laws* upon others, and denounce *War* againſt all that receive them not. And this is that which makes the great combuſtion, and confuſion among us; for while one Man opines one way, another another, and each will obtrude his *opinion* on every body elſe: 'tis impoſſible but the *conteſts* ſhould be ſharp and endleſs; for each Man labours under a double Impatience, the *one* of having his own notions rejected, the other of having the quite contrary impos'd on him; and though 'tis true the *reciprocalneſs* of the Injury ought to allay the *diſpleaſure* at it, yet Men ſo much more conſider what they *ſuffer* than what they *do*, that every one cries out aloud of that hard meaſure, which him-

ſelf offers without regret. And between *winds* ſo contrary and ſo fierce, 'tis no wonder if *ſtorms* ariſe; and in ſuch *tempeſts* has Religion ſo long been toſſed, that it now needs the interpoſition of a divine *miraculous power*, to keep it from ſinking; for alas, theſe *Skirmiſhes* expire not with the firſt Propugners of the Opinions; they perhaps began as *ſingle Duellers*, but then they ſoon get their troops about them, have their *partiſans* and *abetters*, who not only enhance, but entail the feud to poſterity. And indeed this propagation of ſtrife, both in theſe *trifling* and the former more *profound* ſpeculations, is the moſt fatal circumſtance of the whole Caſe: Were it not for this, though we might have *many errors*, we could have *no Sects*. And if the Church might be ſometimes wounded with the *darts* of ſingle Adverſaries, yet ſhe could not be ſurrounded and beſieg'd with *combinations* and *confederacies*. Some ſtragling Souldiers might prove *renegadoes*, but they would not revolt in *troops* and *legions*. We ſhould not have ſuch numerous parties, who with the greateſt violation of Chriſtian unity, denominate themſelves, not from the *grand author and finiſher of our Faith*; but from the *firſt broacher of their Idoliz'd opinions*. In the mean time, 'tis a ſad contemplation, that a little *vain curioſity* ſhould weigh ſo much, or the Churches *peace* ſo little with us: that we ſhould acrifice the one, to the *ſatisfaction*, ſhall I ſay, or rather to the *whetting* and *inflaming* of the other. But 'tis a yet ſadder, that this ſhould

chiefly

chiefly be done by thoſe whoſe *learning* enables, and whoſe *profeſſion* ſhould devote to the moſt noble and moſt profitable Studies; nay, have the higheſt obligations to correct thoſe *exorbitancies* in others, which with ſuch *art* and *labour* they propagate and teach. How wounding a ſpectacle is it to ſee our greateſt *Heroes* like *Hercules* at the *Diſtaffe*, thus degenerouſly employed, and to find thoſe who were by Chriſt deſign'd for *fiſhers of men*, thus entertain themſelves like *Children*, with *picking up Shells* and *Pebbles* on the ſhore; and which is yet more unmanly, *wrangling* about them too. Indeed atthis rate, 'tis no wonder if they make the *diſciples* complaint, *We have travelled all night and have taken nothing.* This ſure is ſo little the way to win Souls, that he whoſe buſineſs it is to deſtroy them, can very contentedly refer them to this method; can gladly leave us all our nice and ſubtle *diſquiſitions*, upon the very ſame ſcore that one of the *Gothick* Commanders adviſed the ſparing of the *Italian Schools* and *Libraries*; Let us, ſays he, leave them their Books, that whilſt they amuſe themſelves with ſuch *follies*, we may ſubdue them at our *pleaſure*. It is the ſaying of the Wiſe Man, *There is a wiſdom that multiplieth bitterneſs*; and ſure if there be a wiſdom acquired by theſe curious enquiries, 'tis of this ſort, like the knowledge of Good and Evil attained by our firſt Parents, which taught them to know the Good only by its *loſs*, and the Evil by its *ſmart*. Indeed our too high, and tranſcending *ſpeculations*

on the one hand, and our too trivial and unprofitable on the other; are like the *torrid* and *frigid* Zones, the one conſumes us with its *heat*, the other chills, and benums us with its *cold*; That turns us to *Cinders*, this to *Ice*. Theſe little trifling Notions being too ſlight an exerciſe to keep *heat* in our Chriſtianity, which not only expreſſes but maintains its *life* by ſtrong and vigorous motions. And therefore between theſe *two intemperate*, God has provided us an *habitable Clime*, mean that middle rank of divine truths which tend to practice. Here he would have us dwell and converſe, fix our thoughts and ſtudies: Nor need we fear that they are too dry a ſubject for our contemplation. We ſee as deep Speculators, as any now aſſume to be, found it far otherwiſe. *David* could entertain himſelf with the *Meditations of God's Law* (not his hidden Decrees or counſels) *all the day*, *Pſal.* 119. 97. Nay, it ſeems, the matter was ſo *copious* and *redundant*, that it could not be confin'd within that *narrow boundary* of Time, but invaded the *night* alſo; forced him to defalk from his *reſt*, to beſtow on his *meditations*, *I have thought of thy Name, O Lord, in the night ſeaſon, and have kept thy Law*, Verſe 55. Neither is it a vain expence of Time, which it thus tempts to, but gives the happieſt improvement; lands at that harbour to which all rational ſtudies tend, gives underſtanding, Verſe 130 *makes wiſe the ſimple*, *Pſal.* 19. 7. and this alſo in an eminent degree, ſuch as ſet him above his Teachers, and his Elders

alſo

alſo. *Thou through thy commandments haſt made me wiſer than mine Enemies. I have more underſtanding than my teachers, for thy teſtimonies are my ſtudy. I am wiſer than the aged, becauſe I keep thy commandments*, *Pſal.* 119. 98, 99, 100. Theſe are high and liberal Elogies of this divine ſtudy, and if any ſhall ſeek to divert an unwelcome inference by ſaying that *David* ſpoke them only in pious raptures, that they were the tranſport of his *zeal*, rather than the eſtimate of his *judgment*; we muſt reſolve the objector far removed from ſuch religious *exceſſes*, and under the contrary *defect*; yet the *cauſe* will ſo well bear an *appeal*, that he may be truſted to conſult farther; let him adviſe with *Solomon*, whoſe large deſires and poſſeſſions too of wiſdom, muſt ſuppoſe him no ſtranger to its nature, and he will tell him the very ſame, and that not in his *devouter ecſtaſies*, but in his moſt *compos'd ſedate temper*, when he ſolemnly ſeats himſelf in his School, reads *Ethicks* to his diſciples, and profeſſes his deſign of giving *ſubtilty* to the ſimple, and to the young man *knowledge* and *diſcretion*, *Prov.* 1. 4. For if his whole book of *Proverbs* be ſcanned, the ſumm of it will be found to be nothing elſe but an *exhortation* to the ſtudy of this practick Wiſdom. Nay when his own *underſtanding* was improv'd and advanc'd by *experience* alſo, when he had not only *begg'd* but *bought* wiſdom, after he had given his curioſity its full unbounded range, compaſſed the whole Univerſe and exa-

min'd not only in *contemplation*, but by sensitive *experiment*, whatever therein could pretend to be that good for the sons of Men, *Eccl.* 2. 3. we find after all this busie inquest, he gives up his *verdict* in this form, *Eccl.* 12. 13. Let us hear the end of the whole matter, *Fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the Whole Duty of Man:* And now methinks so solemn a decision of the wisest of Men, and he too inspir'd by the Omniscient God, may be thought of weight enough to acquiesce in. Yet since there are some who love not to weigh in the balance of the Sanctuary, and that had rather receive Responses from *Delphos* than from between the *Cherubims*: Let such at least hear even the Heathen Oracle attesting *Socrates* to be the wisest man, because he directed his studies to the *moral part* of Learning, which he did to such a degree, as to disparage all those more *aery spaculations*, which better'd not Mens manners, but were only λόγων ψόφος, *a noise and clattering of Words.* And *Pythagonar*'s School defines Philosophy, ζωῆς ἀνθρωπίνης καθαρσιν ἢ τελειότητα, *the cleansing and perfecting of humane life*, which two things are said to be done, first by *Vertue*, whose business it is to remove τῶν ἀμετρίαν τῶν παθῶν, *the inordination of our Passions*: Secondly, by *Truth*, which restores θείαν εἰκόνα, *the Image and pourtraicture of God.* And since this is the joynt suffrage both of Religion and Reason, why should those that pretend to ether, defie both, and vainly consume themselves in unprofitable searches? Why should men wander to seek *beggary* and emptiness,

emptineſs, who may with far leſs labour be *rich* at home? Alas, 'tis not *bare knowledge*, how great or univerſal ſoever, that can poſſeſs us of *felicity*. Were it poſſible for us to have a window into *Heaven*, to ſee all the Divine ſecrets, yet that might be but like the rich Man's proſpect into *Abraham*'s boſom, while himſelf was in the *bottomleſs pit*. They are not only the *groſs* and *illiterate Souls* that muſt feed thoſe *flames*, the moſt *Aerial* and *Sublimated* are rather the more proper fuel for an *immaterial Fire*, and the knowledge we carry thither, renders us the fitter company for him, who knew every thing but how to keep himſelf happy. It was at once the Obſervation and Wonder of *Plutarch*, that whereas God has ſeveral *incommunicable properties*, as Power and Immortality, *&c.* Theſe all Men aſpir'd to, in the mean time neglected that of *Goodneſs*, wherein he was willing all Men ſhould ſhare. And ſure there is now cauſe of the ſame complaint, we would have Omniſcience and all parts of Divinity beſides the holineſs, yet alas, thoſe without theſe would prove but fatal acquetts, and that approach towards being *Gods*, would only make us the more *Devils*. The only advantageous as well as poſſible *way* of Aſſimulation with God is by *purity*, and the *means* of that an attentive conſideration of thoſe *divine Revelations*, which are to regulate our practice; theſe at once diſpenſe *light* and *warmth*, direct and revive the Soul: and if Men would not exhale *vapours* to cloud and darken them, eclipſe the cleareſt

Truths

Truths by *difficulties* of their own creating, no Man could miſs his way to Heaven for want of light, and yet ſo vain are they as to think they oblige the world by involving it in darkneſs, as if their *miſts* ſhould like that *which watered the new form'd earth*, *Gen.* 2. 6. ſupply the place of the *dew* of Heaven. But certainly to all ſuch in their profuſeſt liberalities, we need make no other requeſt than *Diogenes* did to *Alexander*, deſire them only that they will not ſtand between *us* and the *Sun*, intercept its rays, and rob us of that which is infinitely better than any thing they can give us. Were this but obtain'd, we ſhould ſoon diſcern the inconſiderableneſs of thoſe things whoſe effects have been ſo ſadly conſiderable to Chriſtendom; thoſe many *Chimæra's* which we wrangle and fight about, would in this Sun-ſhine appear but *motes* that dance in the air, (though God knows as we manage them, they are the moſt luxurious Rebels to the Prince that rules there.) Were but a S. *Paul's* doctrine throughly imbib'd, our curious Arts, *περίεργα γράμματα*, *ſuperfluous unconcerned ſtudies*, would as it happened *Acts* 19. be ſupplanted; and our *devotion* if ſufficiently accended, would, as theirs, *burn up* innumerable *books* of this ſort. And ſure as this would be the *greateſt*, ſo it would be the moſt *triumphant Bonfire* Chriſtendom ever ſaw, as being not only an *indication*, but a *means* of the *mighty growth*, and prevailing of the Word of God, which our vain *Curioſities* ſerve only to impede and obſtruct, while they do as mightily advance *diſſentions* and *animoſities* amongſt men. CHAP.

## CHAP. XV.

### *A Survey of the Cauſes of Diſputes; Thirdly, Intereſt.*

BUT beſides theſe *two*, there is a *third* Fomenter of diviſions, which either for its activity or ſucceſs muſt not ſubſcribe to either of them, and that is *Intereſt*. This is the great *Idol* to which the world bows: To this we pay our devouteſt homage, give it not only our *knees*, but our *hearts*; and as if the making us rich were a *ſecond* Creation, that could cancel all the obligations of the *firſt*, we ſacrilegiouſly entitle our profit to all the Prerogatives of a Creator, give it an abſolute unlimited dominion over us, allow it to preſcribe us all our meaſures of good and evil; to rule not only our *Reaſon* but our *Paſſions* too, (a Soveraignty, alas, we would never yield to our God) and as if the *giving* us *laws* were not Empire enough, we permit it to impoſe *Religions* alſo; for ſure they that obſerve how great an influence it has in *Church-affairs*, will conclude it governs more than the *ſecular* part of the world. And indeed if we look back, we ſhall find 'tis no *novel uſurpation*, but though void of other Title, has the Preſcription of *many Ages*. Divinity has long ſince been made the handmaid of Policy, and Religions modelled by

conveni-

conveniencies of State. The golden *Calves* became venerable *deities*, when they were found apt to ſecure *Jeroboam's* Jealouſies: And *Machiavel's* policy, That *States ſhould ſerve themſelves of Religion*, was a common practice long before 'twas his Rule. And this example of Communities has been tranſcrib'd by ſingle Perſons. In the Old Teſtament we find frequent mention of thoſe *mercenary* Prophets, that turn'd the *office* into a *trade*, divin'd for *money*, nay, ſometimes for more contemptible hire, *handfuls of Barley* and *pieces of Bread*: And in the New we ſee the ſame motive of ſecular advantage had force enough to turn an *Eccleſiaſtick* into a *Laick*, make *Demas* degrade himſelf, and deſert his Miniſtry, and as it thus ſtopt his mouth from preaching the *Truth*, ſo it open'd thoſe of others to divulge *Errors*. Such were thoſe deceivers of whom St. *Paul* ſpeaks, *Tit.*1.11. *Who ſpake things they ought not for filthy lucres ſake.* So when the ſame Apoſtle declaims the moſt earneſtly againſt the *love of money as the root of all evil*, we find he fetches his proof of that Charge from its having *made men erre from the faith*, 1 *Tim.*6.10. And 'tis St. *Peter's* prediction, that the moſt damnable Hereſies, even the *denying of the Lord that bought them*, ſhould be introduced by *thoſe*, who through Covetouſneſs ſhould make *merchandize* of their *Proſelytes*, 2 *Pet.*2.4. and ſure the *event* atteſts the *preſage* to have concern'd more than the Age immediately ſucceeding, there being none of the ſubſequent which hath not in ſome degree aſſiſted its completion;

pletion; nor have we cauſe to wonder *hereat*, ſince 'tis obvious to diſcern the conjunction and dependence between Covetouſneſs and Hereſie. For the *itching Ears*, the Apoſtle ſpeaks of, being an *Epidemick diſeaſe*, give fair opportunity to every *Mountebank* to try his *Experiments*. When Men nauſeate *old* Truths, becauſe they are acquainted with them, and embrace doctrines for the very ſame reaſon, they ſhould reject them, even becauſe they are *new:* When they love no Teachers, but ſuch as thus entertain them, and are bountiful to none but ſuch as they love; there is little doubt, but there will be *Mints* enough ſet on work, when the *Coiners* can thus at once *ſtamp new opinions* for their Diſciples, and *Money* for themſelves: and God knows they are not a *few* of our Diviſions, that have thence taken *birth*. It will be needleſs to ravel far into the Records of elder times, every Man's memory will be able to ſuggeſt to him too many, and too pertinent inſtances. Upon which reflection 'twill be too viſible, that much of ſome Mens late pretence to *Godlineſs* was but a real purſuit of *Gain*; and the *new light* ſerv'd to guide them to their *neighbour's Coffers*: and probably many of our Diſputes had been ſuperſeded, had not the Authors foreſeen, that though they loſt the Queſtion, they ſhould gain what they more ſought. A few eſſays had diſcover'd how much the *Populacy* were pleas'd with *Novelties*, eſpecially ſuch as at once gratified their *Levity* and their *Pride*, by caſting ill reflections on the things or perſons to whom they owed

owned a reverence; and the *liberal contributions* ſuch Teachers met with, ſerv'd ſtill to invite more *labourers* into that *work*, where without the uneaſineſs of a long expectation, their very *ſeed time* was their *Harveſt*, and by ſowing *Tares*, they immediately reaped *Gold*; And 'tis no wonder if ſuch *quick returns* made them *diligent* at the trade, induſtrious to provide thoſe wares they ſaw they could put off ſo well. And would to God we were ſecure, that *this way* of Traffick were yet at an end, for ſo long as theſe *ſpiritual Merchants* can thus impoſe on their *credulous Chapmen*, make them buy one miſchief with another, and exhauſt their *Eſtates* to endanger their *Souls*, we muſt not hope our *diſſentions* will ever ceaſe, our *flames* ever be extinct, that have ſo much *matter* to feed them, and ſuch *importunate blaſts* to blow them up.

BUT *covetouſneſs* is of too unſatiable a nature to be contented with one way of ſupply, 'tis like the *Sea*, that receives the Tribute of *all Rivers* (though far unlike it in lending any back again) and therefore thoſe who have reſolv'd upon the *thriving ſort* of Piety, have ſeldom embarkt all their *hopes* in one *bottom*, nor ſo depended on the *bounty* of their Proſelytes, as to neglect other *ways of preying* for themſelves. They wanted not providence to foreſee, how uncertain a revenue popular benevolence is: That the ſame giddy and violent *humour*, which had opened their hands *ſo wide*, might by working another way cloſe them *as faſt*; or if their *inclinations* continued, their

*abilities*

*abilities* might fail; (a thing very poſſible to thoſe who have ſuch ſuckers) or if both theſe remain'd, yet that they were unlikely to grow in proportion to their own appetites, and therefore found it neceſſary to have ſome other reſerve: and beſides, this way of *flattering* their willing *benefactors* out of part, contriv'd another of *forcing* their unwilling Neighbours out of all their *poſſeſſions*: So making the ſpoils of ſome mens *honeſty* a richer booty than that of others *folly*. Hence *Shiboleths* found out of Covenants and Engagements, to give opportunity of deſtroying a diſſenting brother; by this Art a *fat benefice* became *crime* and *witneſs* too againſt its Incumbent, and he was ſure to be *unorthodox*, that was worth the *plundering*. Thus alas, has the *Altar* of God been attended, or rather invaded by thoſe whoſe very *approach* was a *guilt*, that qualified them rather to lay hold on its *horns*, than pretend to its *ſervice*; for ſure that God, who has declar'd he hates *robbery* for *burnt-offering*, cannot much affect *Robbers* for *Prieſts*. But this is a Theme ſo unpleaſant, I delight not to enlarge on it, and rather wiſh that the memory of it were ſo extinct, that it might remain no where but in the penitential Litanies of the Offenders; my deſign in the preſent reflection is only to make it an evidence how much *covetouſneſs* promotes our *contentions*, which ſure is not more viſible any where than in this inſtance; For where there is a deſign of ſupplanting, that neceſſarily requires another of accuſing; (even *Jezebel* her ſelf projects not to ſeize on *Naboth's* Vineyard without

without a precedent *Charge*) to comply with which neceſſity, not only the *lives* and *converſations*, but the *doctrines* and *opinions* of our moſt eminent Divines have been ſtrangely miſrepreſented, and when that proved not *fence* enough to the *reputation* of their Oppreſſors, they have thought fit to change the *Scene*, and to combate thoſe *opinions* in their *true ſhape*, upon which they could not ſo well faſten their *diſguiſe*. I ſhall not here need to ſay with how much, or how little pretext of reaſon they manag'd thoſe Diſputes: 'Tis enough to my purpoſe that ſuch Diſputes there were, and thoſe founded in the deſire of acquiring ſecular advantages, which ſufficiently atteſts *Intereſt* to be a potent *Abettor* of our quarrels.

BUT God knows that is a truth of which the *world* affords ſo many proofs, that we need not confine our ſelves to this little *Angle* of it, or owe our *convictions* only to our *domeſtick tranſactions*; if we look abroad we ſhall find it too often exemplified. The memorable *diſturbance* given to the Church, as well as State of *Germany* by the *Anabaptiſts*, is a pregnant inſtance; whoſe *new opinion* was but an expedient of inveſting themſelves in *new poſſeſſions*, and their *ſecond Baptiſm* but the ſolemnity of eſpouſing, not only the *fleſh*, but the *world* alſo, which they had renounced in the *firſt*.

AND would God they had been the only Sect of Men, whoſe *doctrines* were ſubſervient to their *intereſts*; for ſuch tumultuous and *Plebeian projects*,

*jects*, though like a *land-floud* they make great ſpoil at the preſent, yet ſoon ſink again. Such avowed and *exceſſive greedineſs* devours *it ſelf*, and the *inſtruments* by which it wrought: ſo that the *defeat* of the ſecular deſign, is commonly the *routing* thoſe Opinions, which were formed for the promoting it. But when the ſame deſire has the advantage of a ſober guidance; when *Avarice* puts on the *Canonical habit*, and twiſts it ſelf not only with the *practice* of Men, but the *doctrines* of the Church; when *Articles* of Religion ſhall be eſtimated by their *profitableneſs*, and Eccleſiaſticks *diſpute*, as Lay-men *fight for Money*: then alas, the *miſchief* ſeems fatal, the *diſeaſe* ſo fixt and radicated, as at once diſcourages, and mocks the attempts of *cure*.

THAT this is the caſe not only in a *particular* and *private* Church, but that which aſſumes to be the *Univerſal* and *Catholick*, is too apparent. The one poſition of the Pope's right to diſpoſe Kingdoms, out-ſtrips all other principles of rapine: This is to drive a *whole ſale* trade, when all other petty Merchants deal but for *parcels*: which as it is a much *bolder*, ſo is it a more *prejudicial* attempt than the invading of private poſſeſſions, and theſe *Duo gladii*, the double armature of *S. Peter*, a more deſtructive engine, than the tumultuary weapon ſnatcht up by a *Fanatick*: but ſure *S. Peter's ſword* though once raſhly manag'd by himſelf, was never deſign'd to arm his *ſucceſſors* to invade Kingdoms: This *property* of it ſeems rather to have been de-

rived from the *Prætorian Souldiers*, who inſolently aſſumed the diſpoſing of the Empire, wherein they at the laſt arrived to that *impudence*, that after the death of *Pertinax* they made *open portſale* of it. αἰσχρῶς ἢ ἀτίμως, ὥσπερ ἢ τῶν ἰδιωτικῶς χειμηλίων, *in a baſe and ſordid manner, as if it had been of common marketable wares:* I cannot ſay the Court of *Rome* tranſcribes that indecent owning of the traffick; but it has in other inſtances ſo well atteſted its good managery, that 'tis not very credible, that Crowns and Scepters are conferred *gratis*. And to *this* ſo advantageous a Doctrine *others* bear proportion: Thoſe of *Purgatory*, *Indulgences*, and *ſupererogation*, are ready inſtances, wherein the *Aſſertors* themſelves ſeem to be unanimous in nothing but in a joynt reference to profit; for when they come to minute definitions they vary and diſagree; ſatisfie one another, as little as their common *Antagoniſts*: and therefore in the Council of *Trent* they prudently choſe in their decrees to propoſe the bare *Articles* backt by the Authority of the Church, and *Anathema's* of the Council, as having by precedent *diſcuſſions* of the points in their Congregations diſcern'd the ſmall *accord* that was among themſelves, when they deſcended to *particulars*. And indeed the *Opinions* were ſo various as to the grounds of the Doctrines, that one would wonder how from ſo differing *premiſes*, they ſhould all infer the ſame *concluſion*; were it not that the *conſpiration* of Intereſt was too potent for the *diverſity* of Judgment. And ſure 'twas a ſtrange deference

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was given to it, when in the matter of *Indulgences*, there was (by the Teſtimony of their own Writers) four *different* Opinions, and yet all *Catholick*: which moderation towards *Speculative* diſſenters, compar'd with the great ſeverity againſt thoſe that oppoſed its *Practice*, ſpeaks loud enough that the *Orthodoxy* of the point lay wholly in the *profitableneſs*; and that *Luther* himſelf had been no *Heretick*, had he buſied himſelf only in ſuch diſquiſitions, as impeded not the *gain* of that Doctrine. Nor is this merely ſurmiſe and conjecture, for if we conſult the *memorials* of thoſe tranſactions, we ſhall find *this* was the thing that moſt alarm'd *Rome*, put that Court in almoſt as great a *commotion*, as the *birth* of Chriſt did *Herod's*: and accordingly in their private conſults, the cloſer *cabals* of the College, the *ſecuring* this part of their invaded treaſure was the grand *deliberation*, upon which account it was, That when *Adrian* ſhewed ſome Inclination to the reforming abuſes both in this and other inſtances, one of his *Cardinals* who better knew the intrigues of affairs, admoniſht him againſt that unskilful piece of *ingenuity*, not only from the example of his *Predeceſſors*, who were reſolute never to confeſs faults by *mending* them, but by *repreſenting* to him, "That no *reformation* "could be made, which would not notably di-"miniſh the *rents* of the Church, which having "four foundations, the one *Temporal*, the other "three *Spiritual*, Indulgences, Diſpenſations, "and Collations of *Beneſices*; no one of them

" could be ſtopped but that one quarter of the " revenues would be cut off. What a reſemblance this advice carries to the oration of *Demetrius* to his fellow crafts-men, *Acts* 19. 25. I need not ſtand to demonſtrate, but while ſuch conſiderations as this, bear ſway in Church matters where *profit* ſhall be the *Touch ſtone* both for faith and manners, we are not to wonder if no *gainful Tenet* be depoſited; or *Peace* bought with that which in moſt mens eſteem is of far more value.

AND this is it which ominates ſadly as to our diviſions with the *Romaniſts*, were our *differences* merely the product of Heat and Paſſion, they would like the *ſmaller clefts* in the ground, want nothing but a *cooler ſeaſon* to cement and cloſe them: but when they are thus form'd into an *intereſt*, become the deſign not of *ſingle perſons* or *ages*, but of *corporations* and *ſucceſſions*; the breach ſeems like the *ſciſſures* and *ruptures* of an Earthquake, and threatens to ſwallow all that attempt to cloſe it, and reſerves its cure only for omnipotence. Indeed till *ſpiritual* and *ſecular* concerns be reduced into their proper ranks, which are now mixt and confounded, the better to diſguiſe the prepoſterous ſubordination of the nobler to the inferiour; till we have forgotten the unhappy *Chymiſtry* of turning *all*, even *Religion* it ſelf *into Gold*, we muſt never hope to get out of the *Furnace*; our *flames* will ſtill grow fiercer, and with this unnatural *effect* to conſume not the *Droſs*, but the purer *Metal*. In

a word, till men can ſever themſelves from their *Avarice* and mean purſuits of gain, they will never ceaſe to ſeparate from their *brethren.* For as the moſt *ſoveraign Balſams* cannot cure a hurt while the *arrow* remains in the fleſh: ſo neither can the moſt *pacifick Remedies* at all avail, ſo long as the ſame *worldly aims*, which made the wound, ſtill ſtick in it.

BUT in the mean time 'tis a *Melancholick* conſideration that Chriſtianity ſhould be by its Profeſſors thus unworthily proſtituted; that the many various and oppoſite Religions, for which we ſeverally pretend ſo much zeal, ſhould be but divers ways to the ſame irreligious end; wherein our *Elders* ſeem to reſemble thoſe in the Story of *Suſanna*, who when they meant to *part* with each other, yet did unawares meet by the impulſe of the ſame Luſt. We find it moved the *patience* even of the *Lamb of God*, to ſee his Father's *houſe* made a houſe of *Merchandice*, though the Traffick was for the furniſhing of Sacrifices: with what abhorrence muſt we think does he now behold thoſe, who drive ſo much a worſe trade in it: who ſell not *accommodations* for worſhip, but the *worſhip* it ſelf to accommodate their *intereſts*, and do not only make Gain *in* the Temple, but *of* it? A thing the ſacrilegious Rapine of our days has made literally true, where beſides the *revenues*, the very *fabrick* and *materials* of Churches, have been *marketable ware*: *Judas*'s good husbandry has been taken up, and *ad quid Perditio hæc?* put as the *common Motto*

upon every thing that could be ſold for *more*, nay ſometimes for *leſs* than *Three hundred pence*. And as *Dionyſius* took away the golden beard from *Æſculapius*, to rectifie the indecency of the Son's having a beard when the Father had none: and *Julian* robb'd the Chriſtian Altars with this *impious Sarcaſm*, ἐν ποίοις σκεύεσιν ὑπερηδεται ὁ Μαρίας υἱός· that *'twas unfit the Son of Mary ſhould be ſerv'd in Plate.* So do men now a days make themſelves *regulators* of holy things, correct the *indecorums* of the Sanctuary, that they may rifle its *treaſures*. Thus do we ſee the Apoſtles affirmation ſadly verified, That *thoſe who will be rich fall into Temptation, and a ſnare*, 1 *Tim.* 6. 9. Such is the greedineſs of a *covetous appetite*, that it ſwallows indiſcriminately whatever looks like *prize*, and rather than it want its prey, God *Himſelf* ſhall be *robb'd*. Nay, 'twere to be wiſht in this inſtance, that That were all; but alas, he is *mockt* too, uſed not only *unjuſtly*, but *contumeliouſly*; we thus make him a property to our ſordid deſigns, and when he has profeſt that he will not be ſerv'd together with *Mammon*, we attempt that which is yet far more blaſphemous, and make him pay ſervice to him with whom he diſdains to ſhare it when paid by others.

NEITHER is Coveteouſneſs the only *Vice* that ſerves its intereſt upon Religion: but as 'tis made a *factor* for that, ſo is it a *cloak* and *diſguiſe* for many other. Of this the Catalogues of primitive *Hereticks* give ſufficient witneſs; divers whereof, as the *Nicolaitans*, *Cerinthians*, *Carpocratians*,

*tians*, and *Gnoſticks* ſeem to have conſtituted diſtinct ſects in *Chriſtianity*, only that they might introduce the moſt beſtial parts of *Heatheniſm*, and pretend an aſſociation in *Religion*, when indeed it was in *luſt*. How far ſome of our modern Sects reſemble them in this particular, I will not undertake to pronounce: though there want not thoſe who make *ſevere*, and not *improbable* conjectures concerning it. But whether that be the main deſign or no; 'tis certain both that wickedneſs, and many other find great ſhelter among them. He that brings *reſolution* to uphold a Faction ſhall not miſs of *Entertainment*, how many or how great vices ſoever he brings with it; and *he* that is of a *godly party*, ſhall in ſpight of the loudeſt Guilts be a *Godly man*. So *meritorious* a thing is it in ſome mens account to be *factious*, that *it covers the multitude of ſins*: hence it is that *Criminals* ſo frequently fly to new Churches for *Sanctuary*: and 'twill ſtill be the concern of ſuch to have ſo creditable a *Refuge*; and therefore we are not to wonder if *this* Intereſt combine with the *former* in promoting our Diſſentions.

BUT alas, as it advances *thoſe*, ſo does it our *guilt* too, that have more than one vile end to which we accommodate our Piety: and ſtill implies the greater *affront* to our God, by how many the more and baſer *intereſts* we ſhroud under his Patronage. Alas, is it not enough, as *Job* ſpeaks, *to hide our iniquities in our boſoms*, but muſt we wrap them in the *Veil* of the *Sanctuary*?

We read that *Goats* once lent a *covering* for the Tabernacle; but here by an impious Inverſion, the *Tabernacle* muſt lend a *covering* to the Goats: The moſt *beſtial appetites* be both concealed and preſerved under the *Shadow* of Religion. *Plutarch* tells us, that when *Marcellus* would have conſecrated a *Temple* joyntly to Honour and Virtue, the *Prieſts* reſiſted it, ſaying, *two Gods dwelt not in one Church*: and if their *vain deities* exacted ſuch a ſolemnity of Reſpect, and would not be Inmates to *one another*, can we think the *true God* will be content to be made ſo to all our *vileſt luſts*? This is ſure the higheſt Contumely to the Divine Majeſty; and never could the *abomination of deſolation* more properly be ſaid to ſtand in the *holy place* than in *this ſence*: for as the *natures* of theſe Guilts are fitly expreſt by *abomination*, ſo is the *effect* of them by *deſolation*; they having brought the moſt *fatal miſchiefs* on the Church.

AND now would God all that are concern'd in this guilt, would ſoberly ponder the weight of it. There are *two things* of which God has expreſt himſelf peculiarly Tender, his *honour* and his *Church*; this is the invading him in both; the expoſing the *one* to Reproach and Contempt, and the *other* to Ruine and Deſtruction; and doubtleſs were there nothing of the *former*, this *later* alone muſt be ſadly accounted for. It remains yet a Character of infamy upon *Achan*: that he troubled *Iſrael* to enrich himſelf: and on *Balaam*, that *he not only loved the wages of iniquity*, but

*enſnared*

*enſnared the people in uncleanneſs :* and ſure the ſame with many aggravations belongs to thoſe, who by the like unworthy practice, have not only rendred the Church a prey to *foreigners*, but made it ſo to *it ſelf*; engag'd one part of it againſt another, till the whole is ſo waſted, that our *Religion* ſeems now nearer extinction, than our *quarrels* about it.

## CHAP. XVI.

### *A Survey of the Cauſes of Diſputes; Fourthly, Paſſion.*

A FOURTH grand contributer to our diſſentions is *Paſſion*, which being by God and Nature placed in a ſubſerviency to reaſon, when it quits its *proper ſtation* and aſſumes *empire*, it muſt needs diſorder and ſubvert not only the ſtate of the *Mind*, but of *every thing* upon which it has an Influence. I ſhall not here attempt any *Philoſophical* diſcourſe either of their *nature* or *number*; all that concerns the preſent enquiry falls under one of theſe two, our *love*, or our *hate*; and is either kindneſs and prepoſſeſſion, or ſpight and prejudice : For the *firſt* of theſe 'tis a thing which *common experience* atteſts to be a moſt forcible corrupter of the underſtanding, which being by native right deſign'd a *Judge*, is by this interrupted in its *office*,

*office*, not permitted to make thoſe impartial Enquiries, on which a right *ſentence* ſhould be founded: But (as it fares ſometimes with *Magiſtrates* in popular inſurrections) forced to give countenance to its own *violation*, to own not its proper native dictates, but ſuch as are preſented to it, by the prejudicate Phancy. And as it thus lays reſtraint upon the *ſuperiour* part of the Mind, keeps the underſtanding in fetters, (ſo to complete the inverſion) it takes off all ties from the *inferiour*: Gives not only *licence*, but *incitation* to the other Paſſions to take their freeſt range, to act with the utmoſt impetuoſity. And ſure there can nothing more be requir'd, to render it a moſt apt *inſtrument* of Tumult and Confuſion. For when every *opinion* that is taken up, ſhall inſtead of *reaſon* and *argument*, arm it ſelf with *heat* and *violence*, there can be no end of contending. And the truth of this is, God knows, too ſadly diſcernible in our *Church controverſies*, which derive a great deal of their *warmth* and *bitterneſs* from this Fountain.

OF this prepoſſeſſion there are two Sorts, the one relating to *Doctrine*, the other to *Perſons*; by the firſt I mean not a ſober conſtancy to thoſe principles which being firſt imbibed by *education*, are afterwards retain'd upon *Judgment*, but an eager *tenacity* of Opinions, not ſo much upon *Truth* or *Evidence*, as upon a confus'd irrational *kindneſs*; a *Platonick love* of ſome Doctrines merely for themſelves, and then making them the *ſtandards*, by which all others are to be meaſured:

meaſured: And this kind of prepoſſeſſion is no ſtranger in the World, there being multitudes of Men, who aſſert opinions with all imaginable vehemence, who can give no better ground of it, but becauſe they like them: And as the wiſer ſort *chuſe* a Tenet, becauſe 'tis *right*; for theſe conclude 'tis *right*, becauſe they have *choſen* it. And having thus enamour'd themſelves of their *Helena*, they expect all ſhould adore, nor can he eſcape the note of Prophaneneſs that refuſes. By this abſurd partiality it is, that ſome *doctrines*, which would themſelves ill abide the *Teſt*, are become the *Touchſtone* both of Doctrines and Men, and no Opinion or Perſon ſanctified which bears not this impreſs. I need not ſtand to give inſtances, either of the *Doctrines* or the unhappy *influence* this eſpouſing of them has had on our diſſentions; but indeed this kind of *prepoſſeſſion* is oftentimes the *conſequent* of another; and this great *veneration* of ſome Opinions is founded in the *reverence* of their Authors. Men take up a confidence of the *learning* or *ſanctity* of a Perſon, and then all his *notions* are received implicitly, ſtrictly embraced, but not ſo much as ſlightly examined; and this *admiration* of mens Perſons, has in all ages been of huge *Miſchief* to the Church, has nurſt up *private* phancies into ſolemn *publick* errors, and given an unhappy perpetuity to many *Heterodox opinions*, which would elſe have expired with their *firſt propugners*. This ſeems to have been foreſeen by S. *Paul*, when he ſo earneſtly exhorts the *Corinthians* againſt the aſcribing

ing their *Faith* to their ſeveral reſpective *Teachers:* But ſure I am, 'twas ſadly experimented by the *ſucceeding Chriſtians*, who owed many of their *diviſions* to it. A pregnant inſtance hereof was the *Millennium*, which in ſpight of its improbability prevail'd *long*, and almoſt *univerſally* againſt the *Truth* upon the ſtrength of *Authority*. *Papias* a holy man and Scholar of S. *John*, having delivered it, the *eſteem* of his Perſon canoniz'd his *miſtake*, and men choſe rather to admit a *doctrine*, whoſe unagreeableneſs to the Goſpel-Oeconomy rendred it ſuſpicious, than think an *Apoſtolick man* could ſeduce them. And the force of this is yet more conſiderable, when 'tis remembred that it found *proſelytes*, not only among the *Vulgar*, who are commonly flexible to any new Impreſſion, but among thoſe of a *higher rank*, men that were *lights* in their generation: *Juſtin Martyr* and *Irenæus* having own'd the *Opinion*, and intimated it to have been received by many others no leſs *Orthodox*; and if ſuch a ſeduction could prevail, ſo early in thoſe purer times, before mens intereſts or ſpleen were adopted into their Religion, and begot voluntary errours, if I ſay the *mere reputation* of a Teacher was then ſingly ſo operative; we cannot wonder at its efficacy in conjunction with thoſe *auxiliaries*, which worſer times have brought in. What concurrence of thoſe there was in the ſeveral *Hereſies*, which after infeſted the *Church*, I ſhall not now examine, but 'tis viſible that many of them grew conſiderable, chiefly from the *fame* of their Authors; thus *Tatianus* upon

on the credit of being *Juſtin Martyr*'s diſciple, had an advantage to diſſeminate his errors, and not only his, but thoſe of *Origen*, *Apollinaris* and *Novatus*, gain'd abettors from the *reputed Orthodoxy* of the Perſons that propos'd them, who having aſſerted the Faith in *ſome* points, were qualified the more proſperouſly to oppoſe it in *others*.

NOR has it been only the miſhap of elder times to have felt the miſchiefs of ſuch prepoſſeſſion; the *diſeaſe* has ſtill advanced, and every day improved in worſe *effect*, by how much men have more degenerated from *primitive integrity*; ſo that the *eaſie Proſelyte* is now in danger, not only from the *blindneſs*, but the *treachery* of his guide, and is often led out of the *common road*, as *thieves* draw paſſengers into *by-ways* for the better opportunity of robbing them: But 'tis not my preſent buſineſs to ſend *hue and cry* after them, to examine what the intentions of thoſe *leaders* are, who miſguide their tractable admiring *followers*: 'tis enough for my purpoſe to obſerve, that thoſe who ſo deliver up themſelves in a blind aſſent to the dictates of any man, are in his power to be abuſed by him if he pleaſes: I ſhall leave it to others, to eſtimate the *probability* that they ſhall not be actually ſo: But certainly this may be ſaid, that theſe *later* ages have beyond all the *former* given Opportunities of ſeducing to any that will uſe them. The one eſtabliſh'd Doctrine of *infallibility* among the *Romaniſts* is eminent for its propriety that way, while under pretence of *ſubmiſſion* to ſomething they call *infallible*, 'tis evident that the

the *faith* of the ignorant Vulgar reſolves it ſelf into that which they acknowledge moſt *fallible*; the Doctrine of their immediate Teachers. But indeed take it at the beſt, ſuch a *perſwaſion* is not only an *error* in it ſelf, and an apt *foundation* for innumerable others, but it neceſſarily renders them incorrigible; the leaſt retraction of a *miſtake* being ſo inconſiſtent with the claim of *infallibility*, that while they retain the *one*, they muſt never attempt the *other*, nor can they ceaſe to Err, till they confeſs it poſſible they may do ſo. How much more than poſſible that has been, the many Innovations of that Church ſufficiently witneſs; and conſequently the danger of preſuming upon the unerrableneſs of a guide. But would all that *upbraid* it there, were themſelves *ſecure* from it, and that many did not in their practice tranſcribe that *decryed doctrine*, and that too with the improvement of worſe *circumſtances*. I muſt call them *worſe*, by how much the *probabilities* of erring are *greater* under the extemporary conduct of a *private perſon*, than the fixt rules of a *community*, and by how much again the voluntary enſlaving my ſelf is more excuſeleſs, than that which the principles of my Profeſſion, and conſequently a ſeeming obligation of Conſcience expoſes me to. And as to the matter of Fact, I think 'tis evident enough, that the *admiration* of mens Perſons is a *ſpreading diſeaſe* that has overrun Chriſtendom; and though a great part of it inveigh againſt *implicit faith*, yet if it be throughly ſcann'd, 'twill appear 'tis rather the *object* than the

the *act* we differ about. He that vehemently oppoſes that homage to the *Conclave*, will yet tamely pay it to a *Claſſis:* and he that refuſes it there, yields it to the Votes of a *Congregational Church*; or if he hold out againſt that too, yet chuſes to himſelf ſome *private Teacher* on which to caſt it: Like *Micah*, *Judg.* 16. *Makes him a Teraphim and a Prieſt too, for his private uſe*; and then confidently conſults his *Oracle*, and has nothing to do but believe its *reſponſes*. Nay, that which makes the matter yet more ſadly ridiculous, is that the very Oppoſition to *one* Uſurpation makes them deliver themſelves up to *another*. How many, when they have heard a *Preacher* rail fiercely at the *Pope*, have preſently made him *theirs*, and ſuppoſing that Zeal an *indication of a ſafe guide*, have given him as *abſolute a rule* of their Conſciences, as that he exclaim'd againſt (perhaps envied) elſewhere? And the like inſtances might be given among our other diſſenting parties. And this has taught ſome Seducers a lucky artifice, made them obſerve to what opinions their Proſelytes had the greateſt averſion, and by complying with their *anger* ſo ſteal away their *love*, that they might after lead them to what they *pleas'd*, yea, perhaps to that which they ſo much deteſted: For there want not examples of ſome, who have by back ways been brought to thoſe Opinions, which at firſt they moſt defied. What have been the *attempts* or *ſucceſs* of the Emiſſaries of *Rome* this way, I ſhall not pronounce, though ſome (not improbably) ſpeak them *great*.

FROM

FROM this blind and paſſionate *eſteem* of ſeveral Teachers, have flowed many *pernicious conſequents*, particularly thoſe diſtinct Appellations, which form *differences* into *Sects*, many of which expreſly own *this original*, by bearing the names of their *firſt Authors*. I might here put them in mind, that they are *illegitimate perſons*, whom our Law directs to write with an *alias*, and ask them, *Whether the Church from their ſuperinduced name, has not cauſe ſo to repute them.* But I am ſure I may with the utmoſt ſeriouſneſs ſay, that this *practice* is to the great *violation* of Chriſtian unity, and *reproach* of Chriſtian profeſſion, which ſeems to be abandon'd and diſown'd by us, who inſtead of denominating our ſelves from *the Author and finiſher of our Faith*, find out *new Patrons*, as if we were aſham'd of our *firſt Relation*. Alas, how is the title of *Chriſtian*, which was ſo *glorious* to the *primitive owners*, that they gladly bought the occaſion of boaſting it with Torments and Death, become ſo *deſpicable* to *us*, that every the obſcureſt name is courted to ſupplant it! Have any of our *Idolized readers* bought their intereſt in us ſo dear as *Chriſt* has done, why then are we rather ambitious to be accounted their *dependents* than *his*? 'Tis the *Apoſtles* own argument, 1 *Cor.* 1. 13. when he refutes their factious entituling themſelves to *Paul* and *Apollo*, &c. by asking them if *Paul* were crucified for them: And indeed he there ſays ſo much upon this point, that I need only refer the Reader thither to learn, either the *unreaſonableneſs* of this Schiſmatical zeal for

for our ſeveral Teachers, or the *inevitable contentions* and *animoſities* which ſpring from it; only let me obſerve, that every of his Arguments are more preſſing upon *us*, than on the *Corinthians*; thoſe taken from the unreaſonableneſs ſure are, by how much the *names* we ſo adore are leſs venerable than thoſe of *Paul* and *Cephas* and *Apollo*; and thoſe from the conſequences are ſo alſo. For thoſe Teachers were induſtrious to *prevent*, whereas ours commonly are no leſs buſie to *promote contentions* on their behalf, and ſo we are more aſcertain'd never to want them.

BUT beſides this *kinder* prepoſſeſſion towards ſome Mens perſons, there is another of a different nature, a *ſiniſter* one. I mean *prejudice* and *diſguſt*; and *this* has done no leſs harm in Eccleſiaſtical affairs than the *former*. Men take up *piques* and *diſpleaſures* at others, and then every *opinion* of the diſliked perſon muſt partake of his *fate*, and be engaged in the *quarrel*: Nor will thoſe that are enemies ever allow one another the honour of being in the right: Nay, ſome have been ſo perverſly *malicious*, that they have given up their *underſtandings* to their *ſpleen*, forſaken an Opinion themſelves approved, only that they might find matter of conteſt with one they maligned. A memorable inſtance of this *Socrates* gives in his *Eccl. Hiſt.* in *Theophilus* Biſhop of *Alexandria*, who having formerly atteſted the Orthodox belief, that God was incorporeal; yet upon a ſudden indignation againſt *Dioſcorus* and his brethren, who maintained the Tenet, he embraced the con-

trary Hereſie of the *Anthropomorphites*, that ſo under the Colour of a difference in *faith*, he might the more advantageouſly purſue his *malice*, and the effects of it were very Tragical, not only to *private perſons* in Tumult and Blood-ſhed, but to the *Church* by reviving that Error, which was before near expiring, and might as *Socrates* affirms, have lain in the duſt, had it not been thus awaken'd. And indeed in Church-ſtory ſcarce any thing occurs more frequently than examples of thoſe, who upon private grudges have either begun or fomented Hereſies and Schiſms. Thus *Marcion* being denied the Communion of the *Roman* Church, having before by a *ſcandalous crime* been cut off from his own, he reveng'd himſelf by publiſhing his *deteſtable doctrine:* In like manner *Meletius* upon a diſpleaſure at *Peter* Biſhop of *Alexandria*, firſt ſeparated from the *Church*, and after took part with the *Arians*: So alſo *Lucifer* incenſed at *Euſebius* for not approving of his Electing *Paulus* to the See of *Antioch*, broke Communion, and gave both riſe and denomination to a new *Sect*. The like is ſaid of *Apollinaris*, that he was excited to the broaching his *Hereſie* by his impatience of the Excommunication inflicted on him and his Father, by *Theodotus* Biſhop of *Laodicea*; and ſeveral others might be given to the ſame purpoſe, out of the Records of thoſe firſt Ages.

AND certainly the World ſeems not to have ſo much improved in *meekneſs* ſince, as that we ſhould think the ſame *principle* is not ſtill as *active*;

*active*, and if the Task were not more envious than hard, many recent inſtances might be given to parallel the former, eſpecially of ſuch as having juſtly ſmarted *under* the ſtroke of *Eccleſiaſtical diſcipline*, have ſought to revenge themſelves both *on it* and *the inflictors*, by Factions and Tumults; ſo making the *publick* at once cloak the Infamy, and bear the charge of their *particular* rancours. But this is a Subject neither grateful nor neceſſary to be more diſtinctly ſpoken to. One may however in the general ſay, that where theſe private Animoſities are any thing *violent*, they uſually beat down all Conſideration of *publick good*. *Hiſtorians* obſerve of *Themiſtocles*, that he always thwarted the Counſels of *Ariſtides*, not that he thought it the Intereſt of the *Commonwealth*, but *his own*, to keep down the growing reputation of his Competitor: And I fear that envious artifice has been too often tranſcrib'd, as well in *Eccleſiaſtick*, as in *Civil* Tranſactions: No *detriment* is thought ſo formidable to a malicious mind, as the *proſperity* of his Adverſary; and publick Ruptures ſhall ſtill be allowed to widen, till they ſwallow up the whole, rather than he will cloſe with his Antagoniſt. The Hiſtory of the *Scottiſh Church* gives an appoſite example of this in a *ruling Presbyter*, who being by King *James* advis'd with about the re-admitting Marqueſs *Huntley*, and preſt with the preſent exigencies of Church and State, which requir'd it, gave his *final anſwer* in theſe terms, *Well, Sir, I ſee you reſolve to take* Huntley *in favour; if you do, I will op-*

*poſe it, chuſe whether you will loſe him or me, for both you cannot have.* Some may think the greateſt propriety of this inſtance lies to ſhew the *inſolence* of that Tribe towards *Majeſty*; but however 'tis not impertinent to the matter in hand alſo; and ſhews how light the greateſt *publick concerns* are, when *malice* is the counterpoize: And indeed the *Naturaliſts* experiment, that *flame* will not mingle with *flame*, never juſtifies it ſelf better than when applied to minds thus accended, which however they may *meet* in mutual flaſhes, can never *unite* and *incorporate*: The ſadneſs of it is, that they ſhould only conſpire to *common vaſtation*, and make the Church it ſelf a *burnt offering*.

THUS fatal have our ſeveral ſorts of preposſeſſions been to our Religion, for as if that were the *common Enemy*, our moſt diſtant contrary affections, our *love* and our *hate* equally annoy it; thoſe brutiſh parts of us, our *Paſſions*, which like the *beaſts* under the Law, were never to be brought into the *Temple*, but for *ſacrifice*, are *now* found there upon a far differing account, not to be *ſlain*, but *ador'd*; like the *Ægyptian Iſis* and *Oſyris*, enſhrin'd to receive our *Devotions*; for that the Zeal we pretend elſewhere is really paid to them, is, alas, too manifeſt.

CHAP.

## CHAP. XVII.

*A Survey of the Causes of Disputes; Fifthly, Zeal.*

TO these several causes of our distractions we may add another, which though in its *original* it may seem more *innocent*, yet is in its *consequents* no less *pernicious*, and that is a *mistaken Zeal*; which as it is *fire* to all about it, so is it *wind* to it self, fanns and irritates its own *flames*, and by a confidence that it does *well*, gathers still fresh vigour to do *more*. How great the force of such an erroneous perswasion is, we may collect from our Saviour's premonition to his Disciples, when he tells them, that *those who kill'd them, should think they did God service*; and if *Murder*, and that of *Apostles* too, could by the *Magick* of blind Zeal be so transform'd, we must not wonder to find other *Crimes* so too. And what *Christ* thus foretold was after eminently exemplified in S *Paul*, whom the Holy Writ represents under all the Phrases that may denote a virulent *persecutor*, as breathing out *threatnings* and *slaughter*, making havock of the Church, and in his own words, *Persecuting that way unto the Death*, and being exceedingly mad against them; and all this he did being Zealous towards God, and out of a *perswasion* that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of *Jesus*, as we find

in his *Apology* to his country-men and King *Agrippa*, *Acts* 22. 2. and 26. 9.

AND of the abettors of thoſe novel doctrines which after-times produced, we have reaſon to think many were of this ſort, eſpecially in thoſe Hereſies, which though they carried *ſecret venome* in them, had yet a *plauſible appearance* of Sanctity and Devotion; ſuch was that of the *Encratites*, which ſeem'd to be founded in the veneration of two great Vertues *Continence* and *Temperance*, though by extending them beyond the due limits, they loſt that *Sobriety* they too ſtrictly embraced, and became *inordinate* in their Continence, and *exceſſive* in their Abſtinence: Such again were the *Euchitæ* or *Meſſalians*, who made the whole buſineſs not only of *religion* but even of *life* to conſiſt *in praying*; and though by it they evacuated all other ends of both, yet having the *letter* of a Precept, and the *pretence* of Devotion on their ſide, 'twas a *proper bait* for thoſe who had *much* Zeal and *little* Knowledge. In like manner the *Novatians* Hereſie had ſo glorious an inſcription of Purity, as was very apt to attract well meaning Souls; who ſeeing it bid ſuch expreſs *defiance to Apoſtaſie*, could not ſuſpect that it was it ſelf any *defection from the faith*; and accordingly ſome of that Sect approved their conſtancy in times both of *Heathen* and *Arian* perſecutions. Nor muſt we be ſo uncharitable to the modern times, as not to believe many have acted upon the like Principles, and meant truth and piety, even while they actually

promote

promoted the contrary. But how ſincere ſoever the *purpoſes* of ſuch ſeduced Perſons were, yet 'tis evident the Church has ſuffered no leſs by *them*, than by the *more crafty deſigners:* their *miſguided piety* has made as great and incurable Ruptures, as the moſt *flagitious blaſphemies* of others. And when a *rent* is once made, it matters little, whether it be done by *error* or *malice*; nay, perhaps as to the hopes of repairing, the former may be the more deſperate: for whereas *he* that knowingly *commits* an ill, has the *upbraidings* of his own Conſcience towards his reducing; theſe on the other ſide have its *Cheriſhings* and *Encouragements*, to confirm and animate them. And doubtleſs they are great advantages which *Satan* has in all ages made ſuch Perſons, whom he ſeems to have deluded in the ſame manner, that *Medea* is ſaid to have done the daughters of *Peleas*, whom ſhe perſuaded to hack their *aged Father* in pieces, in hope that by her *Magick*, he ſhould not only recover *life* but *youth:* ſo theſe rend and tear their *Mother* the Church out of a hope no leſs deluſive, of reſtoring her *priſtine beauty* and *vigour*; how far the event parallels it alſo, the dying ſtate of *Chriſtianity* does too ſadly teſtifie.

NOR has it only been the heat of *erring perſons* that has been thus miſchievous, but ſometimes *men of right judgments* have too much contributed to the breach of Unity, and the intemperate and prudent *Zeal* of theſe hath ſerv'd to exaſperate the miſtaking *earneſtneſs* of the other:

this happens ſometimes for want of diſtinguiſhing between the *Eſſentials* and *Circumſtantials* of Religion, and ſo looking upon a miſtake in the *later* with the deteſtation proper only to the perverting of the *former*; by this means thoſe who have entirely embraced the ſame *faith*, have yet violated *charity* and broken *communion:* ſuch ſlight *minute differences* when manag'd by eager Spirits being eaſily blown up into ſolemn and *laſting contentions*; ſo that the diſputes rais'd about ſome *pin* or *nail* of the Temple, have ſometimes ſhaken and endanger'd the *whole Fabrick*, robbed the Church of that fraternal unity which was its a faſteſt cement, and ſureſt ſupport. Of this we need no more apt inſtance from Antiquity than that which has been already mentioned upon another occaſion. I mean *Victor*'s unbrother-like heat towards the Eaſtern Churches in the *controverſie* about *Eaſter*, which had fomented that difference into a Schiſm, which the meeker Piety of his Predeceſſors thought no ground of *unkindneſs*, much leſs of *Separation*, as *Irenæus* more at large tells him; and probably had Men in all the ſucceeding Ages deliberately *pois'd* the Errors they oppos'd, and proportion'd their diſpleaſure but to the *juſt weight* of them, many of our *diſputes* would have been ſo calm'd, that they ſhould never have become *quarrels*. But many in this particular have only us'd the *Touch ſtone*, not the *Scales*: and of Opinions that are erroneous, conſider not which are more or leſs pernicious, but with an eq al violence fly at all, as

if

if the *Stoical* opinion concerning *Sins* had prevail'd in *Errors* alſo, and that all were reſolv'd to be of the ſame ſize.

BUT even in thoſe of the higheſt kind it may perhaps be doubted, whether *too eager an oppoſition* have not ſometimes done *hurt*, eſpecially in thoſe Doctrines which relate to the *myſterious parts* of Religion, wherein a *novelty* is at firſt lookt upon with ſome horrour, and many are willing rather to *condemn* in groſs than nicely to *examine:* Who yet when they find this done for them by *Orthodox perſons*, they think they may with ſuch a guide venture to wade into the queſtion, where many times the *inſinuations* of Error are ſo ſubtile, that all their *Antidotes* ſecure them not from *infection*, but they are themſelves *captivated* where they expected only to *triumph*. Neither want there thoſe of the *Vulgar* that are of a more *inſolent temper*; and out of a vanity of making themſelves *Umpires* between learned Men, greedily read the writings of both Parties, who yet are able to make no *ſolid judgment* of either; and when 'tis remembred how many *popular artifices* there are to byaſs ſuch perſons, we muſt confeſs that *Truth* has many to one *Odds* againſt her: Beſides, *publick arguing* oft ſerves not only to exaſperate the *minds*, but to whet the *Wits* of *Hereticks*, and by ſhewing them the *weak parts* of their Doctrines, prompts them to rally all their *Sophiſtry* to fortifie them, that what they want of *truth* and *reaſon*, may be ſupplied with *fallacy* and little colours; and experience ſhews how fitly

that

that kind of *Logick* is accommodated to the greateſt part of the World. In ſhort, it ſeems not improbable, that many Hereſies owe much of their *growth* to the improper means of *eradicating* them: and have acquir'd a *reputation* from the *ſtir* that was made about them. Thus *Socrates* tells us that *Alexander's* Letters about the *Arian* Hereſie ſerv'd to ſcatter that peſtilent infection the more abroad, and combin'd Men into parties, ſo that the whole *world* became the *Scene* of that long Tragedy, which poſſibly might have had a ſhorter and better *iſſue*, had not the notice of the Controverſie been ſo early diſpers'd.

BUT if the attempts of the *Pen* have often proved ſo unfit, it may be conſider'd whether thoſe of the *ſword* are not more ſo, and *fighting* be not a worſe expedient than *diſputing*: and certainly we have great reaſon to conclude in the affirmative, if we weigh either the injuſtice or Unreaſonableneſs of it. I know there want not thoſe who have thought the propagating Religion by Arms not only *lawful* but *meritorious*, and that in order to the *planting* it in a Nation, the *ſoil* may be mellowed with the *blood* of the Inhabitants; nay, the *old* extirpated, and *new* Colonies planted. But we are to remember that as God is the *univerſal Monarch* of the World, ſo We have all the relation of *fellow ſubjects* to him, and can pretend no farther juriſdiction over each other, than what he has delegated to us: and ſure 'twould be hard to produce any commiſſion

miſſion from him for the invading a Nation only becauſe 'tis not of our Faith. 'Tis ſure, *thoſe* to whom he firſt entruſted the promulgating of the Goſpel, had far *different inſtructions*, and 'twere fit our *new Evangeliſts* ſhould ſhew their *later authority* for this ſanguinary method; in order to which though ſome have made uſe of the *Opinion* of ſome Schoolmen, That *dominion is founded in Grace*, yet as that is but an Opinion, ſo were it admitted as the moſt certain Truth, it could never warrant any enterprize of this kind, for ſuppoſing that a people by wanting *ſpiritual* Bleſſings did loſe all their right to *temporal*, yet that Forfeiture muſt devolve only to the Supreme Lord, and when as God in another caſe asks, where is the *bill of divorce? Eſay* 50. 1. ſo we may demand of theſe zealous Invaders, where is the *bill of aſſignment*, by which that right was transferr'd to them? In ſhort, *peace* is the moſt valuable bleſſing of humane life, and we cannot without injuſtice deprive man of it, though we could as we pretend, give them *truth* in lieu of it; for maugre the *Proverb*, That *Exchange will ſtill be robbery*, where the parties are compell'd to make it. But alas, 'tis a vain imagination to think that Religion can be thus impos'd: or that we can bind the *underſtandings* and *wills* of Men, with the ſame fetters we do their *bodies*; 'Tis true indeed the Apoſtle tells us, *there is a way of bringing every thought into Captivity to the obedience of Chriſt*, but he tells us withal that the *weapons*, by which that Victory is atchieved, *are*

*not*

*not Carnal*, 2 *Cor.* 10. 4. Indeed did Religion conſiſt only in ſome external *conformities*, external *force* might bear ſome proportion to it (which perhaps is the cauſe that the one is moſt us'd by thoſe whoſe religion is moſt eminent for the other) but 'tis ſeated in thoſe *faculties* to which *outward violence* can have no acceſs. Alas, 'tis not whole Armies can beſiege my *reaſon*, nor Cannons batter my *will*, 'tis *conviction* not *force*, that muſt induce Aſſent; and ſure the *Logick* of a conquering Sword has no great propriety that way; *Silence* indeed it may, but *convince* it cannot: Its efficacy rather lies on the other ſide, breeds averſion and abhorrence of that Religion, whoſe firſt addreſs is in blood and rapine: nor do ſuch *attempt* gain any thing to the Cauſe but the *infamy* of thoſe rigours which are us'd to promote it. And ſure ſince this piece of *Mahumetan* Zeal has been tranſplanted into *Chriſtendom*, it has been much more miſchievous than in its native ſoil: Chriſtianity having been infinitely more oppreſſed by thoſe that thus fought *for* it, than thoſe that were in Arms *againſt* it. Whether upon this ſcore the *Pope* have not done her more harm than the *Turk*, I leave to conſideration.

BUT what is here ſaid of the *military* Sword, I intend not ſhou'd be applied to the *Civil*; for I treat not here of thoſe legal puniſhments, which *Magiſtrates* inflict upon their diſobedient Subjects; who indeed may *juſtly*, nay indeed muſt *neceſſarily* require Conformity to *Eccleſiaſtical* laws, as

as well as the *Civil*: the Eruptions in the *one* commonly over-flowing the *other* alſo, and *Schiſm* uſually ending in *Rebellion*; ſo that 'tis apparently their intereſt to guard themſelves from thoſe riotous effects of pretended zeal; nor is it leſs their duty, they being, as the Ancients expreſs it, *Cuſtodes utriuſque tabulæ*; in S. *Paul's* language, *the miniſters of God*, *Rom.* 13. and in *Conſtantine's* dialect Ἐπίσκοποι περὶς τὰ ἔξω, *Biſhops in the whole outward adminiſtration of the Church*, and if Hereſie or Schiſm be a *ſin*, are by their places obliged to approve themſelves *avengers*; to execute wrath no leſs there, than in other circumſtances: And that they are ſins and of no ſmall bulk, none can doubt that obſerves *Hereſie* ranked, *Gal.* 5. with *Idolatry*, *Witchcraft*, *Hatred*, *Murders*, and other ſins of the fleſh; or *Schiſm* markt out by the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews*, as a kind of *petreſying crime*, which induces that induration, to which the fearful expectation of wrath is conſequent, for ſo we find, *Heb.* 10.26. that *forſaking the aſſemblies* is lookt on as previous to *Apoſtaſie* and final defection: And therefore ſure the Magiſtrate can do nothing kinder, even to the Offenders, than by taking their ſin early, prevent that fatal growth of it. But that his juſt power thus reſcued, I may aſſume my former aſſertion, and conclude, that all other Violences are ſo far from *advancing* Chriſtianity, that they extremely *weaken* and *diſadvantage* it.

BUT of no ſort is this more eminently true, than of thoſe *popular heats*, where the People undertakes

dertakes to chaſtiſe *error*: for beſides that the outrages then committed are very apt to avert Men even from truths which they ſee ſo barbarouſly defended, it often happens that the *multitude* take *cauſleſs alarms*, and think their Faith is invaded when it is not. A memorable inſtance of this kind *Euagrius* gives in his Eccl. Hiſtory, where he tells us, that the Emperor *Anaſtaſius* having added to the *Triſagium* this Clauſe, *Who was crucified for our Salvation*, the whole City of *Conſtantinople* was in an uproar, upon an ignorant jealouſie that thoſe words had ſome Heretical meaning; in which fury they happening to light upon a poor ſilly *Monk*, they immediately kill him as the *Inventor* of that clauſe, and a *conſpirer* againſt the Trinity: So unhappily abſurd are the Tranſports of *wild zeal*, which where it rules, does beſides the *direct Miſchiefs* of Tumult and Sedition, create *others* at the rebound, which are more permanent, and diſcompoſe and embitter mens ſpirits, and render them ſo ambitiouſly *greedy* of *quarrels* for their Religion, that they are not only prepar'd to *receive*, but to *ſeek encounters*: and 'tis too ſure they can never be wanting to perſons of ſuch tempers, ſince the *adverſaries* of Truth cannot have more *advantage* or encouragement againſt it, than this *unpeaceable humour* of thoſe that profeſs it.

BY theſe ſeveral ways has it come to paſs, That even that *zeal* which ſhould be the *life* of Chriſtianity, is become its diſeaſe; and *Religion* like a *Hectick body* is conſum'd by its own *heats*, if at leaſt I may call thoſe its own, which de-

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rive not from its proper and native conſtitution; but are the accidents of its declining ſtate: for how confidently ſoever men pronounce of themſelves, and believe that they are then moſt *pious*, when they are moſt *eager* and *unquiet*; yet 'tis ſure this is far removed from the true *genius* and temper of *Religion*, which like the *God* it worſhips, makes its approaches, not in *winds* and *Earth-quakes*, but in the *ſtill ſmall voice*, 1 *Kings* 19.12. And when 'tis conſider'd, that the greateſt part of the Evangelical Law is made up of *precepts* of Meekneſs, Long-ſuffering, and Condeſcenſion; we muſt conclude that *zeal* very *prepoſterous*, that pretends to obey by *violating* them or to eſtabliſh Religion by *undermining* the moſt eſſential parts of it: and to perſons under that miſtake, we may moſt properly apply the *reproof* given by Chriſt to his Diſciples upon the ſame occaſion, *You know not what manner of ſpirit you are of.*

IT will therefore become Men to look with *Jealouſie* on themſelves in this particular; not too confidently to *purſue* every Incitation which carries a ſhew of Piety; but ſoberly to *weigh* how it agrees with the Rules and Oeconomy of that Goſpel for which it pretends ſo much concern; for though the *true Chriſtian Zeal* can never be too much cheriſhed; yet alas, 'tis not *every warmth* we feel about Religion that can own *that Title*; and ſure we do not more often, or more fatally miſtake any thing than in applying that venerable *name* to things of a far *inferior*, nay ſometimes of a *contrary* nature. How often upon

upon this Error, have Men aſcrib'd that to their *piety* which they owed to their *complexions*, and thought 'twas their *Religion* made them Earneſt, when 'twas merely their *conſtitution*: Nay, how often has *Satan* taken this advantage of tranſforming himſelf into an *Angel of Light*, and inſinuating his illuſions under this diſguiſe. And truly they muſt ſtill be liable to both theſe deceits, ſo long as they place the *eſſence* of Chriſtian Zeal in *heat* and *eagerneſs*. 'Tis true indeed it has its heats but actuated in a far different way; it has flames of *Love*, not of *Anger*; to melt, not conſume our Enemies; and makes us apter to pour out our *own blood* a Sacrifice to Truth than *that of gain-ſayers*. In ſhort, if it be a Fire, 'tis that *pure Elemental* which the *Peripateticks* talk of, which is but of a moderate heat; apt to *cheriſh*, not *devour*.

AND would God Men would ſo far believe this, as to think there may be *moderation*, without the danger of *Laodicean luke-warmneſs*, and upon that ſuppoſition ſuffer themſelves to cool into a treatable Temper, and then I ſhould humbly offer to them theſe few Conſiderations.

FIRST, the great and univerſal *fallibility* of humane Nature, which renders it not only poſſible that we *may*, but certain that every one of us *ſhall* err in ſomething or other; and this ſure is very proper to perſwade lenity to thoſe whom we find actually erring. 'Tis the *Apoſtle*'s argument in the caſe of Sin, *Gal.* 6. 1. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are ſpiritual, reſtore ſuch a one in the ſpirit of meekneſs, conſidering thy*

*thy ſelf, leſt thou alſo be tempted.* Where the common Peccability of mankind is urged to induce Commiſeration and Gentleneſs towards the Offenders; and if this be of force *in ſin*, where the concurrence of the will renders the perſon more inexcuſable, it will ſurely hold much more in *bare Error*, which being purely involuntary, (for nothing is properly Error farther than it is ſo) 'tis to be lookt on rather as the *diſeaſe* than *crime* of the Perſon: and ſince we uſe not to exclaim againſt men for being *ſick*, but compaſſionately to endeavour their *recovery*, why ſhould we here uſe ſo much a *contrary method?* 'Tis true indeed, 'tis neceſſary ſometimes in order to the *Cure*, and ſometimes for preventing the *infection* of others, to do ſome things *uneaſie* to the Patient; and what tends regularly to either of theſe Ends, may in this caſe alſo be Charitably done, by thoſe that have Authority: but *that* differs as far from our uſual *ſeverities*, as the *lancings* of a Phyſician do from the *wounds* of an Adverſary; or *publick* Diſcipline from *private* Spleen. So that notwithſtanding this, we may reſume our *concluſion* and infer from the *Errableneſs* of our Nature, the *reaſonableneſs of compaſſion* to the ſeduced. And as it thus prompts us to look *gently* upon others, ſo alſo to reflect *impartially* upon our ſelves; and conſider how poſſible it is, that even whilſt we condemn others, we may indeed be in the wrong, and then all the Invectives we make at their *ſuppoſed* Errors, fall back with a rebounded force upon our own *real* ones. If this poſſibility were but adverted

to, it would make us leſs poſitive and Dogmatical in our opinions, and ſo conſequently take away one main ground of contention: for though we often quarrel about *matters*, which are indeed but *conjectural*, yet not till we eſteem them *otherwiſe*; and when we conſider how many men have vehemently believed *apparent falſhoods*, it may well allay our *confidences* in all thoſe caſes, where we have not ſome *firmer ground* than our *own* (or indeed any humane) *judgment* to build on it.

AS for thoſe who have the *ſureſt grounds* of Perſwaſion, and by their ſecurity of being themſelves in the Truth, have the more *reaſon* to be earneſt in propagating it to others: let them in the ſecond place conſider how neceſſary 'tis to chuſe *appropriate means* to that good end, without which they do but undermine *themſelves*, and defeat their own *aims*. Indeed Prudence is not only a *Moral*, but *Chriſtian* Virtue; and ſuch as is neceſſary to the conſtituting of all others: without it Devotion degenerates into Superſtition, Liberality into Profuſeneſs, and this of Zeal becomes only a Pious kind of Phrenſie. And of Perſons ſo poſſeſt God may ſay as *Achiſh* did of *David*, 1 *Sam.* 21. 15. *have I need of mad men*? No ſure, the *defence of Truth* is too *noble a Cauſe* to be ſo managed; its *Champions* are not like men in a fray to make every thing a weapon that they can firſt ſnatch up, and lay on as chance or fury guides, but are deliberately to conſult the propereſt expedients, uſe not only *force* but *ſtratagem* againſt the Enemy, and yet withal to take care that while they

*oppoſe*

*oppoſe* one, another gain not *advantage*: For alas, 'tis indifferent to our grand *Adverſary*, by which of his temptations we fall, and if by ſubverting the *faith* of ſome, he ſhipwrack the *charity* of others, he has his *end*, and triumphs at once both over the *ſpeculative* and *practick* part of our Religion.

AND this may induce a farther conſideration, and prompt us to examine what degree of guilt lies on thoſe who either out of a blind, or raſh zeal have given him this advantage. And here though I cannot doubt, but God makes *great allowances* to the miſcarriages of *ſincere intentions*, yet perhaps we have carv'd more liberally to our ſelves than he deſigns us, and preſume our Security greater than in truth it is. For how innocent ſoever a good purpoſe may make our *Error*, yet 'tis a privilege beyond all poſſibility of grant, that our *ſins* ſhould be ſo alſo; therefore if our miſperſwaſions beget wicked practice, we may be accountable for the *one*, though not for the *other*. We find indeed S. *Paul* alledges his *ignorance*, as the cauſe of his finding *mercy*, for his perſecuting the Church, but we are to remember what that *mercy* he there refers to is; not that of *abſolution*, but *converſion*: and had he reſiſted the *later*, though with never ſo full a perſwaſion of his doing well in it, I much doubt whether his good meaning would have ſecur'd him the *former*; So that all the *encouragement*, that Example can afford is, that God may probably do more for the reducing an *erring* than a *malicious* Perſecutor: And when 'tis conſidered that all the odds that

Chriſt makes between him that does ill *knowingly* and *ignorantly*, is in the *number* of ſtripes: we muſt reſolve our *miſtakes* are no ſuch *Amulets* as totally to ſecure us. And then whether our *guilts* ſhall not ſwell in proportion to the *ills* we do, is a queſtion that ſure can never be reſolved in the negative: for if a *good intention* cannot alter the *nature* of Sin, ſure it can as little change their *degree*, or make that of two perſons equally miſtaken, the *murder* of the one, ſhall not be a greater Crime than an *intemperate ſpeech* of the other. And upon this meaſure the accounts of erring zeal are like to riſe very high with many; unleſs we can think Rebellion and Bloudſhed, Sacrilege and Schiſm, with all that train of zealous Enormities to be light and trivial.

NOR will it at all legitimate *theſe*, or any *other* Crimes, though they ſhould happen to be committed in the *defence of Truth*: Of this S. *Peter* is a ready inſtance, who when to *guard* him, who was Truth it ſelf, he had *violated* the Authority of the Magiſtrate in *wounding* an Officer; Chriſt reprehends his raſhneſs, and inſtead of applauding his *zeal*, upbraids his *abſurdity*, that could think his *mean aids* conſiderable to him, who could command *Legions of Angels* to his reſcue. And ſure he is not ſo much more impotent in his *glory*, than he was in his *exinanition*, as now to need our *Sins* to ſecure any of his *concerns*; and if S. *Peter* were thus check'd for *uſing* that Sword which he was a little before warn'd to *buy*, it muſt ſure ſet an ill Character upon thoſe *tumultuous reforma-*

*reformations*, which have ſo much employed the *zeal* of later ages, to which there can never want a concurrence of ſeveral great *ſins*, the *guilt* whereof will ſcarce be wiped off, by their deſign'd *ſubſerviency* to Truth; what degree of *extenuation* it may afford, is hard to pronounce, ſince we have no *rule* to meaſure it by. But whatſoever it is, we are to remember, that it can belong only to ſuch a Zeal as is *purely religious*, that mixes not with our *Paſſions* or *Intereſts*; and therefore before men be too forward to *appropriate* any Indulgence of that kind, 'twill be neceſſary to *Examine*, whether no ſiniſter adherent have vitiated that *integrity* of their purpoſe, to which alone it can (even by their own award and ſentence) appertain.

I HAVE inſiſted the more on *this*, becauſe many are apt to aſcribe too unlimitedly to the force of a *good meaning*, to think that is able to bear the ſtreſs of whatſoever Commiſſions they ſhall lay on it; and by thus preſuming on their *Antidote*, venture boldly on the *deadlieſt poiſons*. To ſuch the foregoing conſiderations may be uſeful; and by robbing them of that *imaginary* Security, help them to a *real* one, by making their good *purpoſes* the Director of good *actions*, not the Apology for bad. This would make Religion look conſonant to it ſelf, which now groans under the reproach of all thoſe Ills, that are acted under its Patronage; and ſure to reſcue her from ſuch a *ſcandal*, is but a very moderate piece of *compaſſion*: Yet would God ſhe might obtain it even from

*thoſe* who profeſs themſelves her greateſt *Votaries*: But alas, 'tis one ſad circumſtance of her ruine, that ſhe owes it to ſuch; that thoſe Weapons which ſhould *defend* her, thus *recoil* into her Bowels, and *zeal* ſhould do her more miſchief than *prophaneneſs*; for while ſhe is but ſcoffed at by *that*, ſhe is wounded by *this*: nor are thoſe *wounds* ever like to cloſe, till our Zeal grow more *balſamick*, partake of thoſe *healing qualities* of Love and Meekneſs, the want whereof has rendred it ſo unhappily inſtrumental to our Diſtractions.

## CHAP. XVIII.

*A Survey of the Cauſes of Diſputes; Sixthly, Idleneſs.*

BUT as *this over-active* humour has done abundant miſchief to the Church, ſo is it obſervable, That the *direct contrary* has done as much; nay, which is yet ſtranger, the one is frequently the product of the other, and our too *buſie zeal* ſprings from our too *great Idleneſs*. How much ſoever this may ſound like *Paradox*, yet both *reaſon* and *experience* atteſt the Truth of it; for we are to conſider that God has put an *active principle* into man, which 'tis impoſſible ſo to ſuppreſs, as that there ſhall be a total ceſſation from *motion*: and therefore every intermitting of ſo'er, regular actings, makes way for wild Extravagant ones; for as nature is ſaid ſo vehemently to abhor vacuity, that the very inanimate bodies would

would forſake their ſpecifick motions to prevent it: So when the *mind* is empty, when it has no worthy and profitable *ſpeculation* to entertain it, every the moſt improper and preternatural *Object* offers it ſelf, and importunately crouds in to fill the *vacuum*. This ſeems to have been well underſtood, though ill applied by *Pharaoh*, when he thought the *Iſraelites* propoſal of Travelling into the wilderneſs to their Devotions, was the Effect of their too great leiſure at home; and therefore encreaſes their *tasks* as the propereſt way of diverting their *deſign*: and in like manner we find thoſe that treat of *Politicks*, inſiſt upon the neceſſity of keeping the *People buſie*, in order to which it is, that they mention the uſe of *Mathematicks* and other contemplative Sciences, to entertain the *active ſpirits* of a Nation, in demonſtrating of *Problems*, ſolving *Phænomena*'s, and drawing *Schemes* and *Diagrams*, who elſe would be practiſing upon the *Government*, making new *Idea*'s and Platforms for the *Commonwealth*: and doubtleſs there is parity of reaſon in the Eccleſiaſtick State, which would have been at *more peace*, had ſome men found themſelves *other diverſions*.

AND this is confirm'd to us by experiment and obſervation of Event; for if we look into the Primitive times, we ſhall find that when there was a neceſſity of defending the *common faith* againſt *Heatheniſm*, when Chriſtians were employed in writing *apologies* and *vindications*, there were much fewer of theſe *inteſtine debates* (at leaſt ſuch as were *Metaphyſical* and purely National)

they had their hands full of the *foreign Enemy*, and had the leſs temptation to jangle among *themſelves*. So alſo when they were under the greateſt ſtorms of perſecution, when the Church was moſt violently aſſaulted from *without*, it had the greateſt calm *within*. They were then inceſſantly employed, and buſied their Thoughts in preparing for the fiery trial. Thoſe cloudy days made them keep cloſe at home waiting for the Bridegroom's coming, and ſuffer'd them not to wander abroad for thoſe unprofitable Curioſities, which though like *Oil* they might nouriſh *flame*, yet would never furniſh their *Lamps*, or gain them admiſſion to the wedding; but in the intervals, and eſpecially after the total ceſſation of their calamity, when their Peace had taken them off their *Vigilance*, when while they ſlept, the envious man had advantage to ſow his *Tares*. Reſt made them *ide*, Idleneſs made them *curious*, and Curioſity *contentious*; and thoſe who under the Tyranny of a *Nero* or *Domitian* were in perfect harmony, under the gentle pious regiment of a *Conſtantine*, grew to the greateſt diſcord; and perhaps (beſides the Divine and extraordinary ſupports the Church had in her greateſt *conflicts*) this may be one of the beſt natural *accounts*, how ſhe came to flouriſh moſt under her heavieſt *preſſures*.

BUT our obſervation ends not here, for beſides this extraordinary importunity of thoughts, which perſecuting times occaſion'd, Chriſtianity is in its frame and conſtitution an *active State*, has its ſtanding buſineſs, and beſides all *accidental*,

a Series of *determinate, conſtant employments*, ſufficient to entertain mens minds: from which we may infer, that when this is throughly adverted to, there will be few *chaſms* of Time to be filled with *foreign impertinencies*. And this gives a clear account how our *diviſions* have come to grow upon us, namely, by the neglect of *practick duties*, for as every age degenerated more from *primitive piety*, ſo they advanced farther in *nice enquiries* and *new opinions*; and as the zeal of *practice* grew cool, ſo that of *diſpute* gathered heat and vigour. So that if we conſider how far our *good works* fall ſhort of the firſt Chriſtians, we need not wonder to ſee our *controverſies* ſo far exceed them; that Time which was gain'd from the *one*, being employed in hammering and forging the *other*. I do not forget that I have before ranked this *diverſion* of Chriſtian Practice among the *effects* of our Contentions, and foreſee it may be thought very inartificial here, to make it the *cauſe* alſo: But alas, its concern in them is ſo extravagantly great, as to have at once the relation of Child and Parent, to be both Root and Branch, Fountain and Stream, and like a *circle* unites in *it ſelf* beginning and end: For as it firſt gave *birth* to our quarrels, ſo it finally receives *increaſe* from them. In ſhort, our oſcitant *lazy piety* gave vacancy for them, and they will now lend none back again for more *active duty*. And as this *neglect* of our general calling of Chriſtianity has been thus pernicious, ſo have the *ill effects* thereof been improved by the like ill attendance on our particular ones. We find S. *Paul* takes

takes notice, that the *younger widows*, who deſerted their own *Eccleſiaſtical* Office, grew *buſie bodies* in the Secular affairs of others; and ſure we may with truth invert the note, and obſerve that *thoſe*, who either deſert or neglect their *Secular* Callings, are the moſt perniciouſly *medling* in Eccleſiaſtick matters. Did men conſcientiouſly employ themſelves in their *honeſt occupations*, their minds would be ſufficiently *diverted*, and it would not become the work of Artificers to make new Schemes of Doctrines or Diſcipline; Divinity would not then paſs the *Yard* and *Loom*, the *Forge* and *Anvil*, nor Preaching be taken in as an eaſier ſupplementary *Trade*, by thoſe that diſliked the *pains* of their own. But all this alas, we have ſeen to the equal ſhame and detriment of Piety. *Mechanicks* of all ſorts have preſum'd to *teach* what themſelves never *learnt*; and thoſe that ſerv'd long *Apprentiſhips* to other Crafts, have become *Divines* in a moment, and with the ſame emulous induſtry wherewith they us'd to invent new *faſhions*, have made new *Religions*. And as Idleneſs has thus made ſome *Preachers*, ſo it has made more *hearers*, thoſe who either by the *eaſineſs* of their Callings, or their ſlight managery of them, have had the moſt *vacant time*, have been the apteſt to run after *new Teachers*. Hence it is that Towns and Cities have been the great *nurſeries of Faction*, the *leiſure* of ſhop-men making them more *inquiſitive* after, and *receptive* of Novelties. And were that *over-grown zeal* of Sermons, which has now devour'd all other parts of Religion, among that

ſort

ſort of men throughly ſcanned, we ſhould find idleneſs goes very far in its *compoſition*; for beſides that Hearing is the moſt *lazy* of all religious Offices, as appears by the *undiſturb'd ſleeps* men can take at Sermons; it is manifeſt this inſatiate appetite of it, is originally founded either in the not *having* buſineſs, or not *attending* to it. For ſhould I ask ſuch men, whether if neceſſity had enforc'd *S. Paul*'s rule upon them, that without their *labour* they ſhould not *eat*, they would have ſpent their whole week at *Lectures*, and truſted to be fed by the *Ear*. I believe few could pretend to have begun with ſo exorbitant a zeal, though the truth is in the iſſue it ſometimes arrives to it; and men that have *itching ears* forget the reſt of the *body*, whilſt to gratifie them, they totally neglect all care of their *ſecular concerns*, and bring themſelves and families to want and beggary.

NOR is it only this *one rank* of Perſons whom idleneſs has betrayed to faction, *Servants* we have frequently ſeen under the ſame ſeducement, while either having but *little work*, or but *little diligence* in it, they have found time to liſten after *novel doctrines*, with which being once tainted, they impatiently thirſt after more, and neglecting the *duties* of their place, ſpend their *time*, which by compact is their Maſter's (and can with no more juſtice be purloin'd from him than his goods) in following *factious Teachers*, who inſtruct them ſo in their Chriſtian *liberty*, that they bring them to defie all *ſubjection*: And by telling them they are to call no man Maſter upon

*Earth*;

*Earth*, that they are to own no King nor Prieſt but *Chriſt*; teach them to contemn all Authority, *Domeſtick*, *Civil*, or *Eccleſiaſtick*.

IF we look farther into *families*, we ſhall find alſo that many of our She zealots become ſo upon the very ſame ground, when *Women* neglect that which S. *Paul* aſſigns them as their proper Buſineſs, *the guiding of the houſe*, their Zeal is at once the *product* and *excuſe* of their Idleneſs; and in ſpight of the *ill Character* the Wiſe man has ſet on her, *whoſe feet abide not in her houſe*, *Prov.* 7. 11. it becomes the *mark* of a Saint, when a Lecture or Conventicle is taken in the way: And though theſe feminine Irregularities may ſeem to be of no great concern to the publick, yet experience convinces the contrary; it having been the *unhappy privilege* of that Sex (as ancient as their Mother *Eve*) to be able to do great and important *miſchiefs*; and doubtleſs many *men* may give the ſame account of their Schiſm and Sedition, that *Adam* did of his firſt ſin, *The woman that thou gaveſt me*, &c. This has always been well underſtood by *Seducers*, who have found it the moſt compendious way to their deſigns, *to lead captive ſilly women*, and make them the *Duck-coys* to their whole Family: But even thoſe who have miſt of this influence over the *minds* of their Husbands, have yet had it over their *Purſes*, and out of them ſupported the *Rabbies* of the Faction; who in gratitude to thoſe wiſe *Abigails* give their Husbands the *title*, and perhaps wiſh them the fate of *Nabal*. And God knows, how many men have thus been made

made contributers to the *cauſe* they have moſt deteſted, maintain'd that *fire* which thoſe *incendiaries* have kindled in the Holy Place; *Money* being no leſs the *ſinews* of Eccleſiaſtical than Secular *War*.

THUS we ſee how the *Idleneſs* even of the moſt inconſiderable perſons has at the rebound been extremely *pernicious* to the Church, which like a *Clock* or *Watch* may be diſorder'd by the *ruſt* of the leaſt *pin*; how much more then, by that of the *main wheels* and *ſprings*? If Negligence in *lay callings* have though but an oblique, yet ſo inauſpicious an Influence, the like neglect in *Eccleſiaſtick* muſt needs have a worſe, becauſe more immediate and direct. And would to God we could ſay this had been wanting to the completeing the miſchief: But alas, many of thoſe who are called to labour in the *Lord's Vineyard*, ſeem to have forgot their Errand, and ſtand there all the day *Idle* (a much worſe ſight than to have ſeen them ſo only in the *Market-place*;) ſo that I fear there is too evident ground of ſaying, that the *ſlight execution* of the Paſtoral Office, has been *one* of the moſt eminent Contributers to our diſtractions. And among *all the parts* of that Charge, none has been more generally, or more perniciouſly neglected than that of *Catechiſing*; the want whereof has left People ſo unbottom'd, that like a *houſe* built on the *ſand*, every wind of Doctrine blows down that Faith which they only profeſt, but underſtood not. This is that which has made ſo many *unſtable Souls*, as S. *Peter* obſerves, 2 *Pet.* 2. 14. to be the proper prey of deceivers.

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And God knows, we may from ſad experiment confirm the note. I wiſh the ſame *negligence* do not again evidence it ſelf by the ſame *effects*: But beſides this, which is part of the *publick* Miniſtry, (and deſervedly is ſo, being uſeful to the whole Church, the aged as well as children) there are *private* intercourſes between Paſtor and People which are of *great uſe*, would God they were of *equal practice*: We know a *careful* Shepherd does not only turn his *flock* into a *common Paſture*, and then think he has done his work, but does with a particular advertence obſerve the *thriving* of every one of them, takes notice of their ſingle *ſtrayings* and *diſeaſes*, and accordingly applies himſelf to reduce or cure them, and ſurely the like care is full as neceſſary in the *ſpiritual* Shepherd; 'tis not the *counſel* which is promiſcuouſly diſpenſed in a Sermon (and whereof 'tis odds every man takes that which is leaſt proper for him) that will do the *buſineſs*: Converts come not in now as in Saint *Peter*'s days, in throngs and ſhoals, a more diſtinct and particular application is now neceſſary; men muſt be treated with apart, their particular *wants* diſcern'd, and *applications* accordingly made of *inſtructions*, *reproof* or *comfort*, and 'tis theſe appropriate *Medicines*, that are like to make *ſound flocks*. Had Miniſters generally beſtowed more *pains* this way, they might probably have fruſtrated the *attempts* of Seducers, who could not ſo eaſily have inſinuated themſelves into the people, had they found them thus prepoſſeſt: but while theſe with all the arts of a ſubtle *induſtry* infuſe

their

their *poiſons* into every one they meet, nothing but the like *diligence* in adminiſtring *Antidotes*, is like to countermine them. How much of that has been us'd I ſhall leave to the Conſciences of concern'd perſons to determine. But beſides the *ill influence* the Paſtor's negligence has on the *People*, it has in reſpect of themſelves an immediate propriety to the advancing our debates, the *leiſure* which is thus acquir'd, being apt to betray *ſpeculative perſons*, to the ſtudy of thoſe *curious queſtions*, which are the great *diſturbers* of our Peace; and of thoſe that ſtudy them, ſo few keep themſelves in neutrality, that parties are ſtill fomented by it: whereas were the *practical buſineſs* of their Charge throughly attended, the *remainder of time* would be more than the *ſtudy* of the more ſolid, uſeful parts of Divinity would exact, and conſequently there would no *ſurplus* be left for thoſe *dangerous impertinencies*, *which*, as the Apoſtle ſays, *ſerve to no profit, but to the ſubverting of the hearers*, 2 *Tim.* 2. 14. But when our Watchmen *ſleep*, 'tis no marvel if they *dream* too, and entertain themſelves and others with thoſe *phantaſtick notions*, which the great day will manifeſt to have had nothing of *weight* and *reality*, beſides the miſchiefs they wrought.

AND indeed if we ſcan the *volumes* of thoſe vain Speculations, we ſhall have cauſe to conclude that Idleneſs has *created* as well as *fomented* them; and they had as well wanted authors as abettors, had men found themſelves more uſeful buſineſs: and that not only the extempo-

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rary *Chimæra's of Fanaticks*, but the more elaborate *niceties of the Schools*, have been thus derived: we know *Air* possesses no *place*, where it first finds not a *vacuity*, nor could those lighter *notions* have filled mens *brains*, had they found them prepossest with what was more *solid*: but when men wanted more *substantial work* for their Understandings, they were fain to employ them thus in making *Cob webs*, of which they have made a worse sort of *Jewish* veil in the Sanctuary, and have now involved the *Gospel* in greater Obscurities, than the *Law* was before: whence our *Bezaleels* and *Aholiabs* have been inspir'd for this work I shall not determine; but sure not from him whose Character S. *John* gives us (in peculiar reference to Gospel-revelation) that *he is light, and in him is no darkness at all*, 1 Joh. 1. 5.

THUS we see even *Idleness* wants not its *operation*; but is productive of great and mischievous *effects*; it being the unhappy *poverty* of that Vice, that it *supplants* it self, and by a fatal *Antiperistasis* makes men perniciously *active*: so that we may truly say, *sloth* has made more Business than *industry*. I am sure in this instance it has cut out work for many ages, though of such a kind, that we have little reason to wish that our *Lord* at his coming should find us *so doing*: yet for ought now appears, our *activity* is so wholly bent that way, that 'tis like to be the *only*, at least the most *intense business* we shall be found at.

I MIGHT here take a very apt occasion to declaim against Idleness, as the unhappy foun-

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tain of ſo great Miſchiefs, but that is a *vice* that has been ſo often *arraign'd*, that I need not repeat thoſe *charges* which all Authors, Natural, Moral and Divine have laid againſt it. Let but this of its being the *Original* of *faction* be added, and there can be nothing wanting to render it a moſt *dangerous crime*: yea, and a moſt *monſtrous* one too, that operates thus preternaturally, that *freezes* and yet *inflames* Men at once, *ſtupifies* and *enrages*: And yet alas, there is as much riddle in its *fate* as its *nature*; 'tis *hated*, and yet *embraced*; generally *decried*, and yet as generally *cheriſhed*: and though it have no *advocates*, has many *friends*. Would God men would at laſt be aſhamed to *be* what they are aſham'd to *own*, and by a diligent attendance on their proper buſineſs, ſecure themſelves firſt from doing *nothing*, and then from doing *ill*; the one being ſo cloſe an Attendant on the other, that 'tis ſcarce poſſible to ſever them. And God knows the Church finds too ſad proof of their connexion: *Idleneſs* having ſerv'd as *Aſhes* to keep alive that *fire* which has ſet her in *combuſtion*. Thus unhappily *paſſive* is ſhe in our diſorders, and *acceſſary* to all our Guilts and Puniſhments: All our peccant *humours* concur to her *diſeaſe*, and like a common *mark* ſhe receives *arrows* from all Quarters: we have ſeen how many *Contributers* there are to her *ruin*, every one whereof with a wanton cruelty (like *Cæſar*'s murderers) are ambitious to inflict *new wounds*, and to give her *Supernumerary deaths*; and whilſt ſhe is thus ſurrounded with *Aſſaſſines*, what can we expect,

but that her preſent *languiſhings* ſhould end in *death*; that Chriſtian Religion now crumbled into ſo many *minute fractions*, ſhould like *duſt* be ſcatter'd, and irrecoverably diſſipated; and thus infallibly it muſt be, if either God do not miraculouſly countermine us, and do more for us than we can do againſt our ſelves, or we recover ſo much ſobriety, as to forbear to *Maſſacre* what we pretend to *Love*, and endeavour to bind up thoſe *wounds*, at which our own Souls are like to *Expire*.

## CHAP. XIX.

### *The Concluſion drawn from all the Premiſſes.*

WE have hither to Examin'd the *effects* and *originals* of our contentions, and now the only remaining Enquiry is concerning the *ways* of redreſs. And that will exact no long diſquiſition. For as in *diſeaſes* 'tis ſaid, the knowing the *cauſe* is one half of the *cure*; ſo more eſpecially is it here, where the *remedies* are merely *privative*, and we are not to be healed by *external applications*, but only by *ſubſtracting* thoſe Humors which feed the Malady: There will therefore need no other *preſcription* than to adviſe the *exterminating* of all thoſe Paſſions and Intereſts which have appear'd acceſſary to our quarrels, which though they are become the publick

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*Epidemick diſeaſe*, yet as the *infection* did, ſo muſt the *cure* ariſe from ſingle perſons: For as we look not a *common Peſtilence* ſhould ceaſe without due care and manage both of the *ſick* and *ſound*: ſo neither can this *Church plague* ever abate, but by the cure, or fortifying its *individual members*.

LET every Man therefore who has any way made himſelf a Party to theſe conteſts, ſeriouſly interrogate his own heart; what it is that has engag'd him in them: if any of the *ſiniſter motives* before rehearſt, let him for a while ſhift the *Scene*, and inſtead of *accuſing others* as Oppoſites to Truth, *condemn himſelf* as Enemy to Peace: remembring that how juſt or important ſoever the *cauſe* be, it is not ſo to him; whilſt he ſerves his humors and deſigns under its covert. The *Philoſophers* in their darker notions of *Truth* could yet diſcern, that ſhe was not acceſſible to *any* who ſought her not purely for *her ſelf*, with ſincere and ſingle Intentions, and if ſhe entertain no *Pupils* that are not ſo qualified, is it fit ſhe ſhould have *Guardians* and *Champions* of a quite diſtant Temper? No, he that undertakes the defence of *Speculative* Verity, muſt firſt poſſeſs himſelf of that *practick* Truth the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks of, *Pſal.* 51. That *in the inward parts*, ſuch a ſimplicity and integrity of Purpoſe, as may ſupplant all thoſe indirect Aims, purge out every prejudice and paſſion, which may byaſs and pervert him; and by that time he has done *this*, 'tis odds but he will find a *new face of affairs*, and diſcern that many of thoſe things he ſo fiercely contended about, were

either falſe or trivial; acquir'd their *conſiderableneſs* only from thoſe *magnifying perſpectives* of his own Luſts, through which he viewed them. However till he have thus denudated himſelf of all theſe *encumbrances*, he is utterly unqualified for theſe *Agonies*; and how lawfully ſoever others may ſtrive, 'tis ſure he cannot, that does it upon ſo unlawful grounds, and therefore upon *pain* of loſing much more than a *corruptible crown*, muſt *withdraw himſelf*. As for thoſe who can yet *acquit* themſelves from having fomented our Diſtractions, I ſhall not forbid them to look with great complacency upon it, but rather by conſidering how valuable a *piece of Innocency* it is, engage and encourage themſelves to *preſerve* it; and to that purpoſe, jealouſly to examine the *firſt overtures* of a Temptation. When they find any *proneneſs* to immerſe in Faction, any unwonted *heat* towards a Diſſenter, to trace it to its *fountain* and *original*; nicely to obſerve whether it iſſue not from ſome of thoſe *envenom'd ſprings* forementioned, and make as much haſt to ſtop its *current*, as they would to impede the moſt *overwhelming inundation*; for ſuch 'twill infallibly prove to thoſe who indulge to its courſe. But as a *Turf* will at firſt cloſe the *breach*, which neglected becomes the *inlet* of a mighty *Torrent*: ſo had this *early vigilance* been us'd, it might with eaſe have prevented thoſe Diſtempers in *private* Breaſts, from whence the *general* Confuſion has ſprung. As it is, might but theſe two things be obtain'd, would but the Guilty *purge*, and the innocent *guard* themſelves

themſelves, we might yet hope to ſee an *end* of our Diſcords: not that I ſuppoſe it poſſible to extinguiſh *all diverſity* of Opinions among Men, who from their *differing faculties*, and other *guiltleſs occurrents*, may and will have their *judgements* ſeverally diſpos'd. But firſt, were *all*, who have upon the former culpable motives enter'd the liſts, *excluded*, we ſhould find They would amount to ſuch a number, that there would be *few left* to maintain the Combate. Nay, ſecondly, were it not for thoſe *conceal'd inducements*, there would ſcarce be any *Combate* to maintain, thoſe are the things that convey the *ſting* and *malignity* into our Differences, without thoſe we might diſſent, but not fall out; and ſhould no more be angry to ſee another *opine contrary to us*, than we are to ſee him of a *different ſtature*, or *complexion*. In fine, let us pretend what we will, 'tis the Carnality *within*, that raiſes all the Combuſtions *without*: This is the great *wheel* to which the Clock owes its *motion*, while the *pretext* of Truth and Piety is but like the *hand*, ſet indeed more conſpicuouſly, but directed wholly by the *ſecret movings* of the other. This, *this* alone is it which creates and continues our broils, and by a monſtrous conjunction of *Properties*, is it ſelf both *flame* and *fuel*: Nor can we doubt that from hence ſpring thoſe railing accuſations, we bring one againſt another, if we remember what St. *Jude* tells us, that the *Angel* brought them not even againſt the *Devil* himſelf, he could calmly manage a *diſpute* with the moſt execrable and provoking *Adverſary*, becauſe his

*Angelick nature* had none of that *carnal leaven* which ferments to the *ſouring* of ours, an evident Indication what it is that has rendred our arguings ſo invective, that *divinity* ſeems now an Artifice to elude *law* by daily patronizing thoſe *Libels*, which would elſe be obnoxious to *civil Juſtice*.

BUT I preſume there need no more be ſaid to evince this, which has, I fear, the atteſtation of too many conſciences, to be generally doubted; the *greater difficulty* will be, to perſuade the depoſiting of thoſe *luſts*, which though they are confeſtly the *Boutefeaus* among us, have yet by I know not what Faſcination ſo *endear'd* themſelves, that we tenaciouſly *retain* them in ſpight of all their appendent Miſchiefs; nay, we *cheriſh* and *foſter* them, and for that very purpoſe bring them under the *covert* of Religion. He that has but a *puny vice*, if he get it like *Joaſh* conceal'd and ſhelter'd in the *Sanctuary*, 'twill not only *live*, but *reign* too; put on a Port and Majeſty, and appear venerable upon the pretence of that Piety, whoſe Eſſence and Being it evacuates and undermines.

INDEED Sin never arrives at ſo luxuriant a *growth* as when it roots in *hallowed ground*, which *Satan* ſo well knows, that he has ever been induſtrious to *plant* it in that *ſoil*. Thus we find he had introduced the moſt *brutiſh Crimes* into the religion of the *Gentiles*, interwoven them into their Sacred *Rites* and *Myſteries*, till vertue and vice had changed names, and it became *piety* to be Wicked, and *profaneneſs* to be innocent. And when that groſs deceit became detected by *Goſpel-light*, when he

he could not in the ſame manner obtrude upon *Chriſtians*, he yet found the way to do it more obliquely, and by ſtarting theſe religious *quarrels*, gave at once employment and reputation to the moſt irreligious *vices*. For alas, what part of wild *fury* was there in the Heathen *Bacchanals*, which we have not ſeen Equall'd if not Exceeded by ſome *intoxicated zealots*? Or what *Cruelty* in their moſt barbarous *rites*, which has not been matcht by the *inhumanity* of diſſenting Chriſtians? So that upon a juſt ſcanning, all our ſplendid *pretence* of ſanctity is but an *emulation* of Gentile Impurity under a better name; and while we damn Heathens for their *Moral virtues*, we are yet ſo ſtupid as to hope our ſelves to be ſaved by their *worſt vices*.

AND now who that does enough *conſider* can think he can enough bewail this ſad ſtate of affairs? That Chriſtianity ſhould thus out-run it ſelf, and bring us round to *Gentiliſm* again, whilſt her profeſſors ridiculouſly contend for the *title* of the beſt Chriſtians, by *ſuch acts* as denominate them none at all. Thus have we inverted the *ſignificancy* of that *Sacred Name*, and made it ſerve only to upbraid the *contrariety* of *our practice*; ſo that *that* which was once the *Index* to point out all *Moral* and *Divine Virtues*, does now on the contrary mark out *that part* of the World, where *leaſt of them* reſide. This, this alone is the *prize* we have acquir'd with ſo much *ſweat* and *blood*, this the *Triumph* we have brought to our Religion, which indeed could never have ſunk to ſuch a *deſpicableneſs* by any Endeavours but our

*own*; for ſo long as Chriſtianity waged *war* only with *foreign* enemies ſhe never miſt to be *victorious*, but ſince that theſe *inteſtine diſcords* have turn'd her force againſt *her ſelf*, *Bella geri placuit nullos habitura triumphos*, there is no poſſibility of ſucceſs, the mere *fight* implies a *defeat*, and the *Swords* of all Parties meet in her *bowels*. 'Twas a paſſionate *expoſtulation* that *Julia* is ſaid to have us'd with her two ſons *Antonine* and *Geta*, whoſe animoſities having prompted them to *divide* the Empire, which they were joyntly to have *enjoyed*, ſhe askt them whether they would divide their Mother alſo; implying how much their *diſcords* had rackt and torn her. And ſure our *common Mother* may make a yet ſadder *complaint* of her Sons, by whoſe *unkind diſſentions* ſhe is ſo miſerably *mangled*, that ſhe may cry out with the *Pſalmiſt*, *My Soul is among Lions, and I lye among the Children of men that are ſet on fire.*

AND now if amidſt all our *importunate pretences* to Piety, there be indeed any ſuch thing among us, methinks it ſhould give us ſome *relentings*, make us ſadly conſider to what a *deplorable condition* we have brought that very *religion* on which we profeſs to hang all our hopes; and would God thoſe who are the moſt nearly concerned in this Contemplation would purſue it to the utmoſt; let them on the one hand ſet the moſt *glittering temptations* to Diſcord, and on the other let them view the *diſmal effects* of it, and then conſider at how *dear a rate* they gratifie a few *impotent Paſſions*. Can any man without Horror

ror think that his *thirſt* of glory has brought *diſhonour* to his Religion, and conſequently to his God; that his *curious enquiries* into things ſecret, has helpt to evacuate the more *uſeful things* Revealed; or in ſhort, that his *purſuit* of his various *intereſts* and *appetites* has deſtroyed what was ſo incomparably more valuable, the *honour* of the Goſpel, the *unity* of the Church, and as many *ſouls* as have periſht by that ſcandal? 'Twas as infamous a Character of *inhumanity* as the very *Poets* could feign of *Diomedes*, that *he fed his horſes with man's fleſh*; but alas, that barbarity is here infinitely out-done, when Men nouriſh far *worſe brutes*, their own unreaſonable *Luſts*, with thoſe things that are moſt *ſacred*. Certainly were the vaſtneſs of this *guilt* throughly weighed, 'twould make Men ſick of thoſe petty wretched *acqueſts* they have thus purchaſed, make them fling back this *price of blood*, I ſay not with the ſame *deſpair*, but with as great *remorſe* and *deteſtation* as *Judas* did the *ſilver pieces* for which he ſold his Maſter. 'Tis ſure the crimes have too great an affinity, as in all other circumſtances, ſo eſpecially in this, that as the one *was*, ſo the other *is* moſt frequently the Guilt of an *Apoſtle*, I mean of thoſe to whom Chriſt has committed the diſpenſing of that Goſpel which they thus evacuate; and doubtleſs this is a conſideration of great enhanſement, as that which ſuperadds *treachery* to all the other peſtilent *ingredients* of the Crime; 'tis the *falſifying* the more important *truſt*, for under words of that ſignification we find the *office* of the Miniſtry

ſtry every where repreſented in Scripture, as *Stewards*, *Ambaſſadors*, *Shepherds*, and conſequently the accounts of the ſin muſt ſwell ſo much the higher. For a Steward to *embezle* thoſe goods he undertakes to *manage*; an Ambaſſador to *betray* his Prince for whom he ſhould *negotiate*; a Shepherd to *worry* that Flock which he is ſet to *guard*, theſe are crimes that double their malignity from the quality of the Actors; and yet this is undeniably the Guilt of all thoſe whoſe *profeſſion* having devoted them to the *Church*, have impiouſly chang'd the *Scene*, and devoted the Church to *them*, ſerv'd all their mean degenerous ends upon her; and as *Chirurgions* are ſaid ſometimes to deal with profitable Patients, kept open, nay, widened her *wounds* for their own *advantages*.

IT has been the *Prieſts Litany* as ancient as *Joel*'s time, *Spare thy People, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach*; but now alas, who ſhall prevail with them to do that themſelves which they beg of God, to ſpare his people and his heritage; to proſtitute them no more to their own ſiniſter deſigns, nor by their vain and endleſs *contentions*, expoſe them as well to *ruine* as *contempt*? He were indeed a happy Orator that could in this effectually intercede with them, though One would think the *wonder* ſhould lie on the other ſide, and the only ſtrange thing be, that they ſhould either *need* or *reſiſt* ſuch a ſolicitation, it being ſo much the concern of all that ought, as well upon the ſcore of *advantage* as *duty*, to be dear to them; ſo that the *Church* may moſt aptly addreſs

addreſs to theſe her *Sons* in the ſame form S. *Paul* does to the *Philippians*, when he conjures them to unity, *Phil.* 2.1. *If therefore there be any conſolation in Chriſt, if any comfort of love, if any fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil you my Joy that ye be like minded.* And can it be poſſible for any who have taſted all or any of theſe, to think fit to wrangle them away? to exchange theſe divine *irradiations*, the Antepaſt and Emblem of Heaven, for thoſe bitter *diſſentions*, whoſe *Alpha* and *Omega*, their *original* and *end* are *Hell*, and do as lively repreſent as they certainly lead to the horror and confuſion of that land of Darkneſs.

BUT if ſome Mens appetites be ſo depraved, that they find more Melody in *diſcord*, than in the *harmony* of the Angelick Quires, yet even theſe can diſcern *Muſick* in a conſort of *Plaudites*, and ſeldom miſs to be affected with thoſe *Eulogies* which are given themſelves; and therefore though they disjoyn the Apoſtles motives, *Phil.* 4. 8. and will do nothing for vertue, yet they may be preſum'd more conſiderate of Praiſe: And God knows, in a wrong ſence they are too much ſo; and ſure, as we have already obſerved by it, have made no ſmall *contributions* to our *diſcords*: yet did they meaſure *Glory* by its right and proper *Standard*, they would find they have all this while courted a *ſhadow*, and that the *ſubſtance* will never be acquir'd by being *fomenters* of publick Miſchief; but the unhappineſs of it is, that our *Eccleſiaſtick* as our *Secular* Duelliſts abuſe themſelves with falſe notions of Honour, novel

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Opinions and ſubtle Queſtions they think atteſt the *pregnancy* and *acuteneſs* of their Underſtandings, and give them *reputation*; but alas, how vain an imagination is this? Who admires the *Sagacity* of the Viper, that eats her way through her *mothers bowels*? Or who reverences a Man for the *ſharpneſs* of that Sword wherewith he commits his *Parricide*? Nay, what more infamous brands have Records of all ages ſtuck upon any, than thoſe who were *Ingenioſiſſimè nequam, & facundi malo publico*, who us'd the beſt Parts to the worſt Ends, and with the greateſt *cunning* and *artifice* have contrived their *Miſchiefs*?

BUT could we abſtract from theſe *pernicious effects*, and ſuppoſe that this *exerciſe* of their Faculties were *innocent*, yet ſure it would be too *light* and *impertinent* to become *matter of praiſe*. He that ſhould ſpend all his Time in *tying* inextricable Knots, only to baffle the Induſtry of thoſe that ſhould attempt to *unlooſe* them, would ſure be thought not much to have ſerv'd his generation. 'Tis one of the certaineſt *Eſtimates* we can make of a Man, to meaſure him by the *employments* he chuſes, if thoſe be *ſlight* and *trifling*, they ſuggeſt the Perſon to have *low thoughts*; what an abaſement of Majeſty was it thought in *Nero* to become a *Fidler* and *Stage-Player*? and *Herodian* tells us, That Men hoped no longer for any thing princely from *Commodus* the Emperor, when he had once liſted himſelf among the *Fencers*, and inſtead of the magnificent *ſtyles* of his Predeceſſors, derived from the *conqueſts* of great and populous

lous Nations, aſſumed This, *The vanquiſher of a Thouſand Gladiators:* And certainly 'tis no leſs a deſcent and diminution for thoſe who were deſign'd by God for the *higheſt atchievements*, the ſubduing the Kingdom of Satan, and pulling down his ſtrong holds, to devote themſelves to theſe ſo much *ignobler conteſts*, and account their *conqueſts*, not from the number of *Souls* won to God, but of *Oppoſers* worſted in Argument. Indeed, as we before obſerv'd, they have now rendred the *Church* a kind of *Theatre*, Diſputes are manag'd with ſuch Sleight and Sophiſtry, that at the beſt, the *Litigants* do but ſet forth a ſhew of *Fencers:* 'Twere well if they did not ſometimes play the *Gladiators*, by that wounding deadly ſharpneſs they uſe, and 'twould be conſider'd what a change is now made: In the Primitive times, none that own'd any relation to the Church were allowed to be *ſpectators* of thoſe Games, now That is made the *Stage*, and her ableſt Perſons the *Actors*. But certainly 'tis very little to the reputation of thoſe who have ſo unworthily debaucht both it and themſelves; and therefore to all other *diſſuaſives* we may add this of the *Uncreditableneſs:* For let men fancy what they pleaſe of the *Glory* acquir'd in theſe opportunities of ſhewing their parts, the beſt that can be ſaid of them is, *that they uſe Wit fooliſhly*. A character whereof the one part devours, the other, and leaves not ſo much as a mouthful of that *popular air* which theſe *Camælions* gaſp after. In a word, though *vain glory* be a principle I ſhall commend

to

to no Man, yet in this caſe 'twere more tolerable if it would work the right way, put them upon what were really *praiſe-worthy*, and then ſure 'twould incline them rather to *cloſe* than *widen* the breaches of *Sion*. To inflict *wounds* on an unreſiſting Patient, is a thing that requires neither *courage* nor *skill*; Every man can do that who has but ill nature enough; but to *cure* them is an act at once of *Art* and *Mercy*, and entitles to the praiſe of both: And therefore if any man's *eagerneſs* of Glory have made him over-ſee the *way* to it, let him now at laſt recover his *wandrings*, and ſeek it in this one only proper *Method*.

BUT this is, I confeſs, a *Topick* of Perſwaſion fitter for *Philoſophers* than *Divines*, and I wiſh I may have urg'd it impertinently; it being much leſs ſhame for *me* to have done ſo, than for *them* to need ſuch an Argument. There is another more genuine and proper, derived from the nature of *diſtributive Juſtice*, which requires a Man to do his *Utmoſt* to repair the *injuries* he has done to any; this is ſo ſtated a *rule*, that all our *Caſuiſts* juſtly preſs it in all caſes of damage: But are there not many of them, who while they ſo eagerly aſſert that *obligation* in other Mens caſes, do as *David* did in the matter of the poor mans Lamb, ſeverely ſentence that *injuſtice*, whereof *themſelves* are more highly Guilty? To every ſuch I would ſpeak in the words of *Nathan*, and ſay, *Thou art the Man.* Alas, ſhall every little *trifle* I purloin from my Neighbour have *weight* enough to ſink me to the *abyſs*? and ſhall *thefts* of the greateſt magnitude, the

the robbing God of his *honour*, the Church not only of her *Patrimony*, but her *Peace*, and the World of thoſe ineſtimable *benefits*, which from an uniform, conſonant Chriſtianity were to have been tranſmitted to it; Shall theſe, I ſay, be ſo ſlight and inconſiderable, as not to hinder his aſcent to the hill of the Lord? Shall the leaſt *violence* I offer to the perſon of an enemy oblige me to *ſatisfaction*, and ſhall he rend and tear the *body* of his Saviour (who willingly expos'd his *natural* body only in tenderneſs to that *myſtical* one, which is thus violated) and ſhall this criminous *barbarity* exact no offer towards amends? Certainly no Man can have *partiality* enough to think it, and if he do not, he is to remember *himſelf* indiſpenſibly engag'd to take the ſame *courſe* he preſcribes to *others*, and with his utmoſt *induſtry* endeavour to repair the *injury* he has done.

AND O that we might ſee this ſo Eſſential a piece of *Juſtice* aſſum'd among us, that our impertinent *ſtrifes* might be ſuperſeded and all moulded into the one noble *Emulation*, who ſhall faſteſt unravel his own *miſchiefs*, and promote that *peace* he has hitherto diſturb'd. This indeed were worthy to be the united deſign of all learned Men; and were it once ſo, who knows how proſperous it might be: For though ſome *ſingle attempts* have miſcarried, yet probably one great *cauſe* why they do ſo, was becauſe they were *ſingle*. When one Perſon comes with *pacifick arguments* to part an *enraged multitude*, let his Reaſons be never ſo convincing, they are not like to be much adverted

adverted to; the only *effect* is, that he who deſign'd himſelf the common *Friend*, is taken as the common *Enemy*; but where many aſſociate in ſuch a deſign, and make a party for Peace, their *numbers* give a conſiderableneſs to their *propoſal*, and prepare for their *ſucceſs*. And were there ſuch a *combination* in order to the Churches Quiet, it were more than poſſible they might undermine the *contrary attempts* of Faction and Diſcord.

AND why ſhould not every man be *ambitious* to make one in this ſo *pious a confederacy*, and reſolve moſt ſtudiouſly to endeavour the *compoſing* the Diſtractions of the Church, in which they may borrow ſomething of *inſtruction* even from their paſt guilts, and copy out their own *induſtry* to this better purpoſe. This is ſure; our *diſputes* had never ſo multiplied, had there not been a great deal of *unhappy diligence* in nouriſhing the ſeeds of them: Every *controverted Tenet* has been heightned and improved, till it have ſpawn'd a *numerous brood*, ſo that thoſe who at firſt *differ'd*, perhaps but in ſome *few* things, wrangle on, till at laſt they *agree* in *fewer*: Now were the like Induſtry applied the other *way*, it might ſure do much to the changing the *whole Scene*. If men would as nicely obſerve the Principles of *agreement* between *diſſenting parties*, and with as much Art and Care ſeek to dilate and ſpread them; why might not they as much *overwhelm* our *Differences*, as they have been *overwhelmed* by them? 'Tis ſure that thoſe Univerſal *Truths*, to which all Parties, aſſent, are, as the *cleareſt* for their Evidence,

dence, ſo the moſt *important*, for their Conſequence: And why ſhould not *theſe*, if rightly managed, be a more enforcing *motive* to Unity, than the more *ſingular opinions* (perhaps fancies) of ſome men, can be to Diſcord? Certainly would but our *Moſes*'s try what this *rod* of *God* in their hand could do, they would find it able to devour all *thoſe* of the *Magicians*. Would they like *Benhadad*'s Ambaſſadors, catch hold of every amicable *expreſſion* any thing that looks towards *Peace*, and cloſe in with it, they might probably ſee *Effects*, beyond what can at a diſtance be expected. For ſure *Peace* is not ſuch a *dry Tree*, ſuch a ſapleſs unfertile thing, but that it might *fructifie* and *encreaſe* as well as *Diſcord*, were there a juſt care taken to cheriſh and nouriſh it.

INDEED this Deſign is only the *Amulet* which can render it ſafe to look into *controverſies*, which are elſe apt to infuſe a kind of *acrimony*, and *venome* into mens ſpirits; for we ſee many, whoſe *curioſity* at firſt brought them as unconcern'd *ſpectators*, do within a while engage with all earneſtneſs in the *conteſt*: but thoſe who ſtudy differences only with an aim of compoſing them, theſe have their thoughts determin'd and fixt, and ſo not left looſe to the enticements of any Party. *Ariſtotle* ſays that on the Hill *Olympus* the Air is ſo ſubtil and piercing, that thoſe who aſcend thither, are forced to carry with them *wet Spunges*, by that *moiſture* ſomewhat to allay that extreme *tenuity* which otherwiſe would be deadly; and ſure they that deal in *controverſies*,

live in no leſs *corroſive an Air*, and therefore had need make the like proviſion, and carry with them this *Pacifick purpoſe*, as a *Lenitive* and *Emollient* againſt the infectious *ſharpneſs* they will there meet with.

AND now how bleſſed a thing were it, if we could once thus follow the things that make for Peace? That the *numberleſs mutual enmities* which are now among us, may all be reduced into *one*, that we may fight not againſt *ſingle Adverſaries*, but againſt *War* it ſelf, and contend againſt *nothing* but *contention*. And ſure our victory here were worth millions of thoſe petty conqueſts wherewith men pleaſe themſelves, and which acquire them ſo little of real advantage, that the ſame account which was given of *Otho* and *Vitellius*, that the *War* would ſwallow up the one, and the *victory* the other, is too applicable to our *combatants*, who are like to be equally unhappy in *defeat* or *ſucceſs*. The *Spartans* had an Order that when any of their *Generals* had compaſſed his Deſign by *policy* or *treaty*, he ſhould ſacrifice an *Oxe*, but when by *force* and *bloodſhed*, a *Cock* only: from the diſtant values of which oblations, *Plutarch* obſerves how much they preferr'd the Atchievements of calm and ſober *counſels*, before thoſe of *ſtrength* and *power*: but ſure the diſparity is more eminent in the preſent inſtance, where if we *fight* we *wound* our Brethren, but if we *unite* we *deſtroy* our Enemy; baffle and circumvent *Satan*'s Maſter-ſtratagem, and not only *worſt* but *out-wit* him. Indeed this

this and this only is worth our Induſtry, whereas thoſe *little defeats* we give each other, are like *thoſe* in a civil War, wherein the *publick* is ſtill ſure to be a *Loſer*; upon which conſideration the *Romans* allowed not their Captains to triumph for ſuch Victories; and ſure our *Chriſtianity* is very ill beſtowed on us, if it have made us ſo much worſe natur'd, as to chuſe thoſe ruinous Conqueſts *at home*, before the moſt glorious and profitable ones *abroad*.

'TWAS *Abner*'s admonition to *Joab*, when he was in a hot purſuit of the *Iſraelites*, 2 Sam. 2.26. *Shall the ſword devour for ever? knoweſt thou not it will be bitterneſs in the latter end?* And ſure 'tis more than time for our Leaders to make the ſame reflection, and as *Joab* did there, call back the People from following their Brethren: Nay indeed, would they but attend, they might hear themſelves called back; the *great Captain* of their Salvation ſounding a *retreat* from theſe fatal skirmiſhes. *Xenophon* in the inſtitution of *Cyrus* tells us of one *Chryſanthus*, who in the heat of battle had his hand lift up to *ſtrike* an Enemy, but hearing in the very inſtant the Trumpet ſound a *retreat*, *ſtopt* his blow. A great ſobriety of *courage* ſo to ſhew more Zeal to the *obeying* his General, than the *annoying* his Enemy; and an Inſtance of much *reproach* to our *Spiritual Combatants*, who have ſhewed themſelves ſo much worſe diſciplin'd, as in ſpight of daily repeated *calls* to Peace, ſtill to *purſue* their Hoſtility: But ſure ſuch an *inſolence* is ſo inconſiſtent with the

*pretence* they make of fighting God's Battels, that they muſt either *reform* the one, or *diſclaim* the other.

AND now if after all that hath or can be ſaid of the *obligation*, *neceſſity* or *advantages* of Peace, we are put to the Pſalmiſt's Complaint, *That there are ſtill thoſe that will make them ready to battle:* if men are of ſo untreatable a Temper, that nothing can be obtain'd of them; what remains for thoſe that are peaceable and faithful in *Iſrael*, but to *bewail* thoſe Miſchiefs they cannot *redreſs*? If the Church muſt periſh, at leaſt to give her Funeral-rites, and if they cannot quench her *flames*, yet to bedew her *aſhes* with their *tears*. 'Tis true, we cannot yet ſay ſhe is quite *dead*; but though ſhe *breaths* yet in a few pious peaceful Souls, yet like a *palſied perſon*, ſhe ſcarce *moves* a Limb, ſhe wants vigour to actuate the generality of her profeſſors, and remains rather a *trunk* than a *body*: and ſure if there be truth in that Phyſical Aphoriſm, which ſays, That *diſeaſes which croſs the temper and conſtitution of the Patient are moſt dangerous*; we may well conclude her *deſperate*, there being nothing more repugnant to the very Elements and Principles of her Being, than thoſe contentions under which ſhe now *groans*.

YET there is an *Omnipotent Power* to whom no difficulties are inſuperable, an *unerring Phyſician* who makes the moſt hopeleſs Diſeaſes, but the Triumph of his Art. O let us reſort to him, and invite his Aids in the ſame pathetick form, where-

wherewith he was ſolicited for *Lazarus*, *Jo.* 11. 3. *Lord, behold ſhe whom thou loveſt is ſick:* She for whoſe ſake thou endureſt ſuch contradiction of *ſinners* againſt thy ſelf, is now by the contradiction of her own *Children*, languiſhing and expiring, ſhe for whom thou pouredſt out *thy blood*, lies weltring in her *own*; Lord, ſave or ſhe periſheth: Were ſuch Petitions enforced and ingeminated by the daily breathings of humble devout hearts, who knows how prevalent they might be? In this ſenſe alſo *Heaven* might ſuffer *violence*; nor is there any better countermine to all the *outrages* acted upon Earth, than by making them thus reverberate in our *cries* and *prayers*.

AND perhaps *this* Conſideration will draw us all, even the moſt *peaceful* of us into the *guilt* of a negative Acceſſarineſs to the preſent Miſchiefs. There are divers that diſlike our *contentions*, and blame the *abettors*; but yet with ſuch Unconcern'dneſs and Indifferency, as that wherewith we commonly talk of the *combuſtions* of foreign States, wherein we rather expreſs our *Judgment* than our *reſentments*, and do make it more our *diſcourſe* than our *concern*. And even of thoſe who have in ſome degree laid it to heart, who is there that has not been ſome way wanting in the ardency, or frequency of his interceſſions? Let every one ſeriouſly interrogate his own heart, and I fear 'twill witneſs to him, that his own *private concerns* are much apter to excite his *devotions*. Let us remember with what *paſſion* and

*importunity* we invoke God in our particular Exigents, and conſider whether *we* are equally affected with *thoſe* of the Church; Haſt thou been like *Hezekiah*, ſick unto death? And haſt thou with him wept ſore, and vehemently ſolicited a recovery? Hath thy *eſtate* been invaded by Oppreſſion, thy *fame* by Slander and Detraction? And haſt thou with loud and earneſt cries, appealed to that *God to whom vengeance belongs*? Or haſt thou been in that condirion which is proverbial for ſetting men to their prayers? Haſt thou like *Jonas* been in a ſtorm, in minutely expectation of being ſwallowed up by the *waves*, if not the *Whale*; and in the Ecſtaſie of fear, when as *thy ſoul was*, as the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks, *even melted away becauſe of the Trouble*, haſt cried unto the Lord, and even out-nois'd the billows in thy clamorous importunities for aid? Haſt thou in all, or any of theſe eſtates been thus affected for thy ſelf? Then remember whether thy *reſentments* have been proportionable for *that* which is much better than thy ſelf: If the no leſs imminent and preſſing *dangers* of the Church, have not as much awakened thy *fervor*, given as ſharp and piercing an *accent* to thy Prayers, thou muſt needs confeſs, thou haſt fall'n ſhort of what thou ſhouldeſt and mighteſt have done towards her reſcue.

AND if this Inquiſition be *impartially* made, who among us can plead *not guilty*? And therefore in reflections upon our paſt omiſſions, we are *in juſtice* oblig'd to redouble our *Zeal*, to ſay over again our *tepid heartleſs prayers*, and inflame

flame them with a *Coal* from the Altar; an earneſt affectionate concern for all that is holy, ſuch as may prompt us to cry, and that mightily to God: We ſee the *Ninevites* could do it when there was no viſible approach of *danger*, but merely upon the *preſage* of a ſtranger Prophet, backt with the *conſciouſneſs* of their own Guilt: I fear we more than equal them in the *latter* motive, I am ſure we far exceed them as to the *former*. The *Miſeries* we are to deprecate being not only under denunciation and threat, but actually upon us, though withal ſo improveable, that after all the *black Catalogue* our Experience brings in, our Fears meet us with the *bottomleſs Prophetick menace*, Eſay 5. 25. *For all this his anger is not turn'd away, but his hand is ſtretched out ſtill.* 'Tis the uſual Oeconomy of divine Juſtice to make our *Crimes* our *Puniſhment*, and to give us up to *thoſe ills*, which were at firſt, our own *depraved choice*: and God knows we have too much reaſon to fear this may be our caſe: That we who have ſo perverſly violated all the *bands* of Unity, wantonly wrangled our ſelves out of all *inclinations* to Peace, ſhould never be able to reſume them; that all thoſe *gentle breathings* of Grace, by which *exaſperated Paſſions* are to be cool'd and tempered, ſhould be withdrawn, and we finally be given up to be diſſipated by thoſe Whirl-winds our ſelves have raiſ'd: That *Chriſtianity* which we have made the ſtale and property to our irregular *appetites*, us'd only as *fig-leaves* to hide our *ſhame*, ſhould wither and ſhrink

into nothing; and that *we* who could not agree in what manner to *retain* it, ſhould at laſt too well agree to *renounce* it.

THIS alas, as it is the *fearfulleſt*, ſo is it the *probableſt* Iſſue of our wild Contentions, ſuch as nothing but the miraculous effluxes of divine *Clemency* can avert. O let us with all the *groans* and *tears*, ſo deplor'd a Condition exacts, addreſs thither, importune the *father of Mercies* to pity *us*, who know not how to pity *our ſelves*, and that though we have caſt off *all bowels*, yet that we may find them all concenter'd *in him:* That he will heal our *wounds*; and which of all others is the moſt deſperate, our *unwillingneſs* to be healed: that the *Spirit of Peace* may over ſhadow us, and impreſs on us the *dove like qualities* of Meekneſs and Gentleneſs: That he would reſcue our Religion from our Profanation, not by taking *it* from Us, but by conforming *us* to It: Finally, That he would do for us, not only above what we can *ask* or *think*, but beyond what we would *wiſh* or *chuſe*, and not ſuffer us to *acquire* the Miſeries we ſo eagerly *purſue*.

THIS *divine interpoſition* alone is it that can poſſibly ſecure us, and indeed the ſuit amounts to no leſs, than that he will *force* upon us the Bleſſing we *reſiſt*, and do us good againſt our wills, which is ſo bold a *requeſt*, that they had need be more than ordinary Favourites that ſhall prefer it. Thoſe *hands* muſt be very pure, that are lift up in ſuch an *interceſſion*: and therefore all that undertake it are obliged to qualifie themſelves for

for it, by purging out not only the *leven* of Malice and Strife, but all other *filthineſs* of the Fleſh and Spirit: without This, we can never approve our ſelves to intercede in earneſt; for what can be more ridiculous than to deprecate the *ruine* of Chriſtianity by the *contentions* of other men; when our ſelves contrive it by ſome other vice of our own? This is not to deſire it ſhould *live*, but that none but we ſhould *kill* it. 'Twill therefore concern thoſe who wiſh the *Peace* of the Church, to examine whether they do as much project for her *Purity*; otherwiſe 'tis a mockery to pretend ſuch a *jealous tenderneſs* for her. We have ſeen there are more ways than one, by which Chriſtian practice may be evacuated, and it matters little from whence that wind blows that ſhipwracks our Piety. Yet 'tis not to be denied that of all thoſe *tempeſtuous blaſts*, this of our *contentions* is the rougheſt and moſt fatal. 'Tis indeed not a ſingle guſt, but an encounter and ſtrugling of ſeveral contrary winds; and God knows no *poetical deſcription* can out-do the *horror* of the ſtorms they have rais'd; yet for ought I diſcern, there is nothing that is leſs vulgarly accuſed, which I muſt account to the Reader, as the *cauſe* why I have detain'd him ſo long upon this Head; and given it a *length* ſo unproportionable to the *preceding* parts of this Diſcourſe.

CHAP.

## CHAP. XX.

### *The Close.*

WE *have now ſeen the unhappy riddle of the* Unchriſtianneſs *of Chriſtians unfolded, have obſerv'd the* Originals *and* Cauſes *of That which is too notorious to all the world in its* Effects. *And though in this curſory view the* Reader *is not to think he has any ſuch* complete diſcovery, *as ſhould ſuperſede his own* farther inquiſition, *yet as it may ſerve to* awaken, *ſo ſomewhat to* aſſiſt *his Induſtry, give him ſome light and inſight into the wiles of Satan: and by branding ſome of the chief of thoſe* cheats *which have robb'd us of our* Piety, *prepare for the detection of the* whole Confederacy: *in the interim this* Specimen *may ſerve to ſtop his wonder at the* ruinous eſtate *of Chriſtianity, for though 'tis true that it was compacted of all the moſt* incorruptible materials, *had all the* harmony *of parts which the moſt exact* Frame *and* Compoſure *could give it, and ſo was qualified both for* ſtrength *and* beauty, *to have defied all the* injuries *of Time; yet while ſhe has ſo many* Underminers, *'tis not ſtrange to ſee her in the* duſt, *there being no* one *of theſe, eſpecially that I laſt inſiſted on, which has not deſtructive* efficacy *enough, firſt to* deface, *and then to* ruin *her.*

*BUT it is but an unprofitable acqueſt to know the* Authors *of our miſchiefs if we ſtop there, this enquiry being matter not of mere* Curioſity, *but of the near-*

*eſt*

*eſt and moſt preſſing* Intereſt: *we ſearch not after Malefactors for their* acquaintance, *but for their* puniſhment, *and our own* ſecurity; *and all our diſcoveries of this kind are vain, if we apply them not to that purpoſe. Let me therefore conclude with this* earneſt Petition *to the Reader, That he will not to all the* native *defects of this* diſcourſe, *add this* accidental *one, that it ſhall be perfectly* impertinent: *a mere waſte of his Time and my own; which it will inevitably* prove, *if it engage him not in an* earneſt proſecution *of thoſe* Delinquents *it hath impeacht; and in as earneſt an endeavour to repair the* Miſchiefs *they have wrought.*

*IN ſhort, let every man depoſit what he has here read, not with his* memory *only, but his* conſcience, *let him there ſeriouſly ponder the Excellency of that* holy vocation, *as S.* Paul *terms it,* Eph. 4. 1. to which he is call'd: *and then as ſeriouſly conſider,* whether he have, *as the Apoſtle there exhorts,* walked worthy of it; *if he find he have not* (*as alas, who is there that has?*) *Let him ſearch out as the* particulars, *ſo the* cauſes *of his Miſcarriages: diligently ſift out thoſe Fallacies of* Satan, *or his own* heart; *thoſe ſly Deluſions which have made him act thus prepoſterouſly againſt all the Convictions of common* reaſon, *natural* conſcience, *or Chriſtian* experience; *and when he has diſcovered, let him make no delay to reſcue himſelf from their* Treacheries, *but manfully break thoſe* withs *and* cords (*which are too weak to hold any that will but in earneſt remember, he is a* Nazarite, *a Perſon conſecrated to God*) *reſolute-*

*ly*

*ly reſiſt the* inſidious careſſes *of thoſe* Dalilahs *which will deliver not* Himſelf *only, but the* Ark *to the* Philiſtines. *Nor is he to content himſelf with his own* ſingle eſcape, *but to propagate the* deliverance *to as many as he can; let him blazon and ſtigmatize thoſe* Impoſtors *(for 'tis a* combining *with them to* conceal *them) warn and caution* others *againſt thoſe jugling Artifices, by which* himſelf *was entrapped, and make his own ſhip-wracks a* Sea-mark *for the ſecuring the courſe of other Paſſengers. This is the* Effect *of Chriſt's admonition to S.* Peter, When thou art converted ſtrengthen thy brethren; *and a piece of that Fraternal charity we all owe to every particular Soul, to whom we have opportunity to diſpence it.*

*BUT beſides that* private *Obligation, it becomes a duty upon a higher, and more* publick *account, it being the only way to take off that* Scandal *we have brought upon our* Religion; *which as it was not contracted by the* irregularities *of one or two perſons, but by aſſociated and* common crimes; *ſo neither will it be removed by a few ſingle, and private* Reformations; *there muſt be combinations, and publick* Confederacies *in* Vertue, *to balance and counterpoiſe thoſe of* Vice, *or ſhe will never recover that priſtine honour which ſhe acquired by the general Piety of her Profeſſors. In thoſe primitive days there was ſuch an abhorrence of all that was Ill, that a* vicious perſon *was lookt on as a kind of* Monſter *or* Prodigy, *and like a putrified Member cut off, as being not only* dangerous, *but* noiſome *to the Body: but alas, the Scene is ſo chang'd, that*

*the*

*the* Church *is now made up of* ſuch *as ſhe would then have* caſt out; *and 'tis now as remarkable an Occurrent to find a* good *Chriſtian, as it was there to ſee a* bad: *and ſince every thing is eſtimated not according to its rare and caſual, but frequent uſual Operations, 'tis eaſie to conclude that* Chriſtianity *has loſt as much in its* Repute, *as it appears to have done in its* Efficacy: *nor will there be any way of repairing it, till we be generally rendred ſo malleable to its* impreſſions, *that our Lives may atteſt its* Force *and* Energy.

*NAY indeed 'tis not only its* honour, *but its* being *is concern'd in it, active Principles ceaſe to* be *when they ceaſe to* act. *You cannot hinder the fire to burn but by putting it out: and to* ſuppreſs *the Operation of our Religion is indeed to* extinguiſh *it; at leaſt to deprive it of its proper and ſpecifick act: ſo that if it can be ſaid to be; 'tis only by that abuſe of ſpeech which calls a dead or painted man, a Man: It may perhaps be a* vizor *for the Hypocrite, a* Stale *for the Ambitious, a* waſh *or* tincture *for the Covetous; but where it is* theſe, *it ceaſes to be* it ſelf. *The* eſſence *and* being *of Chriſtianity is* practice; *and according to that Teſt and proof thereof, where almoſt can it be ſaid to Exiſt in the world? We have indeed ſome images and ſhadows of it: Some have taken its* picture, *but the* ſubſtance *and* ſolid body *is vaniſhed, reſolv'd into Air, and ſeems ſadly to have moraliz'd the poetick Fable of* Sibylls *being worn into a voice,* we have turn'd it into a mere noiſe and ſound; *nay, which is worſe, into an* Echo, *that flattering complying voice,*

*which*

*which reverberates every Man's own language to him: Men dictate to their* Religion, *and then will needs perſwade themſelves and others, that their Religion dictates to* them, *will have the* rebounds *of their own Fancy or Luſt paſs for Divine* Oracles; *ſo ſuborning this Aery fantaſtick Chriſtianity to legitimate thoſe practices, which the real ſolid one forbids and execrates.*

*TO this diſmal forlorn eſtate have we brought that which was deſigned to bring us to bliſs, herein far exceeding the barbarity of the brutiſh* Sodomites; *they would have violated the Meſſengers of their* ruine, *but we thoſe of our* ſafety: *We having not only neglected, but vilified and reproacht the* Embaſſie *ſent us from* Heaven, *and inſtead of* embracing *that purity and peace it recommended to us, have done our parts to make it* forgotten *that ever it was ſent upon any ſuch Errand; and indeed ſo it is like to be, if ſome* Heroick Piety *do not revive its* Memory, *and teach us to record it not ſo much in our* books *as* lives: *There, and there only it will be univerſally legible, there it would indeed appear, what it is in its own nature,* the power of God unto Salvation.

*AND now why ſhould we not all Emulouſly contend, who ſhall firſt put off that* ugly vizor *we have put upon our Religion, and reſtore it to its* native form? *eſpecially conſidering that with its* Beauty *we loſe its* Dowry *too; forfeit all thoſe glorious* Rewards *which it promiſes to them that preſerve it* immaculate. *'Tis only a* pure *and* undefiled Religion *that will inveſt us in thoſe* white robes, *wherein*

*we*

*we are to follow the* Lamb. *And ſure thoſe who have here endeavoured to* darken *and* extinguiſh *all the rays of Spiritual Light, that have lived as if they profeſt Chriſtianity merely in ſpight to* defame *it, muſt never hope it ſhall bring them to* ſhine as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father, *or procure them the* Reward *of blameleſs Souls. No, it promiſes no other* Crown *than that of* Righteouſneſs, *and therefore they that want the* Righteouſneſs *muſt want the* Crown *alſo; Nay, beſides that ſo ineſtimable a Reverſion, they loſe all thoſe* preſent Joys *and* Satisfactions *which true Chriſtian practice would afford them, and which both in reſpect of the* intenſeneſs *and* duration, *infinitely exceed the moſt* profuſe ſenſualities *the World ever truſted.*

*THESE are intereſts that are ſure Important enough, and yet we muſt be* wooed *to conſider them, nay, that does not prevail neither, but with a perverſe Coyneſs we* hold off; *all the ſolicitations and importunate* Calls *of God are lookt upon as* Artifices *and* Deſigns, *as if he had ſome Ends of his own to ſerve upon us, and (as the* Corinthians *ſuſpected S.* Paul*) meant to make again of us; we treat with him as if he were the Perſon to be advantaged, and barter for* Heaven *with ſuch an Indifference, as if* It *would want Us more than* We *it; never conſidering that 'tis impoſſible for him to have any other* Concern, *than that which his* Compaſſion *to us creates, and the more* earneſt *and* paſſionate *that is, the more it ſhould excite our own* care, *it being the Extremeſt degree of perverſe Folly, to* abandon *and* deſpiſe *our own Intereſt merely becauſe a Friend or*

*Patron*

*Patron* conſiders *and* prizes *it. And this* brand *muſt lye upon every one of us, who ſtill refuſe to diſcern* the things that belong to our Peace, *after God has done ſo much to render them not only* viſible *but* attainable.

*WHAT ſhall I ſay more, but conclude with Chriſt's paſſionate* wiſh, *that* we might in this our day, underſtand the things that belong to our Peace? *and O that the* Spirit *of Peace and Light would deſcend among us, illuminate us with that true* practical Wiſdom, *which may convince us, that our* Duty *and* Intereſt *are the ſame thing under ſeveral forms, and that while we impiouſly caſt off the* one, *we do as fooliſhly betray the* other. *That ſo thoſe* ineſtimable advantages *our Chriſtianity gives towards both, may not be thus madly loſt, ſerve only* as a price in the hand of a Fool, who hath no heart to it, *Prov.* 17. *And to this end let us humbly and earneſtly invoke the Father of lights, to* illuminate *all thoſe whom the God of this world hath* blinded, *that after he hath ſent into the world the* Image *of his own eternal brightneſs, cauſe the* Sun of Righteouſneſs *ſo long to ſhine upon us, it may not ſerve only to involve us in that moſt* dreadful condemnation, *which awaits thoſe who love* darkneſs *more than* light; *but that anſwering the purpoſe of our* holy calling, *walking as* Children of light, *we may vindicate that* Chriſtian profeſſion, *which we have ſo defamed, ſecure to our ſelves the light of* God's countenance *here, and that of his* glory *hereafter.*

*FINIS.*

# PRIVATE DEVOTIONS, REFERRING

## To the ſeveral parts of the before-going Treatiſe.

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## TO THE READER.

*IT is to be hoped that as this Treatiſe has entertained many; it has alſo had an effect much more deſirable, though leſs comprehenſive to mend and convince ſome. And whilſt it gave an account of the general* DECAY OF CHRISTIAN PIETY *in the* Preſent *Age; has alſo invited a few at leaſt, to its purſuit and ſervice. Upon theſe hopes the* Author *has been perſuaded to add this ſhort* Specimen *of* PRIVATE DEVOTIONS, *that if the ſober and conſidering Reader ſhall find at any time his heart toucht aud ſoftned he may have in readineſs wherewith to actuate his holy flames, and aſſiſt him in his addreſſes to the Throne of Grace.*

# PRIVATE DEVOTIONS.

## *Referring to the ſeveral parts of the before-going Treatiſe.*

O BLESSED Lord, who art infinitely holy and happy in thy ſelf, and from whom alone we derive the poſſibilities of being either; we proſtrate our ſelves before thee, in an humble adoration of thy abundant goodneſs, and a juſt confuſion at our own deteſtable ingratitude: we were aliens and enemies to thee by our corrupt affections, and ungodly works, yet even to us haſt thou been reconciled, nay bought the atonement with the precious blood of thy dear Son: thou haſt ſent him to be the propitiation for our ſins; and (which is no leſs mercy) to be the ſubduer of them too, ſenteſt him by his divine Example and admirable Precepts, to bleſs us in turning every one of us from his iniquities. Thou haſt given us a Law ſo perfect, ſo excellent, as renders our obediences their own reward, and yet ſuperaddeſt alſo an eternal weight of glory to be its future retribution: and leſt our brutal temper ſhould not be attracted by all this, thou haſt hedg'd up our way with thorns, annext a preſent uneaſineſs, and ſubſequent danger to our deviations, ſo by the menaces of Hell eſſaying to fright us into Heaven: and to actuate and enliven all theſe methods, thou addeſt the internal aſſiſtances of thy Grace and Spirit to excite us to good, to reſtrain and avert us from ill, and finally advance us to the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt. And now, O Lord, after all theſe obligations, all theſe aids, what manner of perſons ought we to be, in all holy converſation and godlineſs? But alas, to our eternal reproach,

proach, we have ſignaliz'd our ſelves by contrary practice; blaſphem'd that holy Name whereby we are call'd, and by our enormous lives, ſcandaliz'd our profeſſion, and made it as eminent for vice, as it ſhould have been (and once was) for virtue. Our knowledge of thy will ſerves only to inform us, wherein we may moſt oppoſe it; and while we call our ſelves Chriſtians, we commit ſuch things as are not ſo much as named among the Gentiles. Nay, O Lord, ſo little do we retain of the power of Godlineſs, that the greateſt part of Men have now caſt off the very form, deny the Lord that bought them, trample upon all that is ſacred; and not only think but loudly ſay, There is no God. Thus inſtead of regulating our manners by our faith, we model our faith by our manners, and reap nothing by our Chriſtianity, but the guilt of Apoſtaſie, and the fearful expectation of that fiery indignation which awaits thoſe who have thus trampled under foot the Son of God, and done deſpight to the Spirit of Grace. And now, O Lord, when the foundations are caſt down, what can the righteous do? What counterpoiſe can the groans and tears of thoſe few who mourn in Sion be to ſuch general, ſuch daring impieties, Yet, O God, thou haſt in all ages ſtrangely condeſcended to the interceſſion of thy Servants. O bow thy Heaven again and come down, and hear the prayers of thoſe who deſire to fear thy name: and let them not only deliver their own Souls, but obtain mercy for this perverſe generation, even ſuch a mighty grace as may yet reduce us. O thou who didſt at firſt call us out of Darkneſs into thy marvellous light, recall us now from that worſe darkneſs, wherein we have involved our ſelves, put thy Laws a new in our hearts, and write them in our minds: And after ſo many Years, ſo many Ages of being call'd Chriſtians, let us at laſt begin to be ſo. Revive, O Lord, that Primitive zeal and ſanctity, which may purifie us to thy ſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works. And O thou bleſſed Mediator, who praydſt for thy firſt crucifiers,

intercede alſo for us, who have under the name of Diſciples crucified thee afreſh: and though we have nothing to ſay for our ſelves, cannot pretend that we knew not what we did; yet let thy ſtripes and wounds, thy croſs and paſſion plead for us. Thou didſt once lead captivity captive, O ſtir up thy ſtrength again, and let not Satan now triumph in thy ſpoils, and deſecrate thy Church which thou haſt purchaſed with thine own bloud. O let thy bleſſed Spirit breath again upon us, that even theſe dry bones may live in thy ſight: let him ſo effectually convince and reprove, illuminate and excite us, that we may cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, walk worthy of that holy vocation wherewith we are called, and be capable of thoſe glorious rewards which are prepared for thoſe who fight a good fight, finiſh their courſe, and keep the Faith: where we ſhall ceaſe to grieve, to ſuffer, and to ſin; but never ceaſe to live and to be happy: ſinging perpetual *Hallelujahs* to him that ſits upon the Throne, to the holy Spirit, and to the Lamb for evermore. *Amen.*

## *A LITANY.*

O GOD the Father of Heaven, the God of Angels and of Men, the Father of compaſſions, of conſolation and life;

*Have mercy upon us miſerable ſinners.*

O God the Son, the Eternal well-beloved Son by whom the ſinful race of Men become the Sons of God;

*Have mercy upon us miſerable ſinners.*

O God the Holy Ghoſt, the Spirit of comfort, of holineſs and grace, by whom we receive the Adoption, and the earneſt of our hope;

*Have mercy upon us*, &c.

O Holy, Bleſſed and Glorious Trinty diſtinguiſht as in Perſon, ſo in the various diſpenſations of the work of our

our Redemption; united as in Eſſence, ſo in the acts of kindneſs and compaſſion to men;

*Have mercy upon us*, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to create in us clean hearts, and to renew a right ſpirit within us, to reſcue us from all the deceits of the World, the Devil and our own Hearts.

*We beſeech thee to hear us, good Lord.*

That it may pleaſe thee to grant that all who have been baptiz'd into Chriſt, may indeed put on Chriſt; ſeriouſly weigh, and induſtriouſly anſwer the obligation of their holy calling; not reſt in the form and outſide of Religion, whilſt by a wretchleſs inconſideration they enervate the power and efficacy thereof.

*We beſeech thee*, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee ſo to guide our conſideration, that we do not thereby ſo enſnare our ſelves, entertain thoſe deluſions which flatter us with hopes of reward, without performing duty; but that by an impartial advertency to all thy ſacred dictates, we may be engag'd to a conſtant, entire obedience, and work out our ſalvation with fear and trembling.

*We beſeech thee*, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to open our Eyes that we may ſee the wondrous things of thy Law, to convince us that it is holy, juſt and good, ſweeter than hony and the hony-comb, and that all our objections to it ariſe only from our being carnal and ſold under ſin.

*We beſeech thee*, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to remove all our carnal prejudices, and vicious prepoſſeſſions; and to enable us to meaſure thy precepts by the rules of right reaſon, and an illuminated conſcience, according to the analogy of thy holy faith once delivered to the Saints.

*We beſeech thee*, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to inſpirit us by thy grace, that we may not only approve, but obey thy commands, conquer all the diſcouragements of ſloth and vice, and chear-

fully ſet to the practice of Chriſtian duty, that ſo we may experimentally find how ſweet the Lord is.

*We beſeech thee*, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to put thy fear in our hearts, that we may never depart from thee, but equally obey thee in all things, not indulging to any favourite ſin, but entirely reſign and captivate every thought to the obedience of Chriſt.

*We beſeech thee*, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to take theſe ſtony hearts out of us, and to give us hearts of Fleſh; ſuch as may melt at the apprehenſion of our ſins and thy diſpleaſure.

*We beſeech thee*, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to endue us with a right Judgment, that we deceive not our ſelves with ſhews and formalities of repentance; but bring forth indeed fruits meet for it.

*We beſeech thee*, &c,

That it may pleaſe thee to awake us from our ſupine and dangerous dependence on a future repentance, and make us in this our day diſcern and embrace the things belonging to our Peace, ſo anſwering thy preſent calls, that we may not at laſt call when thou ſhalt only laugh at our calamity, and mock when our fear cometh.

*We beſeech thee*, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to poſſeſs our Souls with a juſt reverence, and right apprehenſions of thy Eſſence and Attributes, that we may not form our belief of thee by our own fancies or wiſhes, but by thoſe revelations thou haſt given of thy ſelf in thy word.

*We beſeech thee*, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to reſtrain our bold Curioſity in prying into thy counſels and decrees, and make us wiſe unto ſobriety, reſerving ſecret things unto the Lord our God, and ſtudying the revealed ones for the regulating of our lives.

*We beſeech thee*, &c.

That

That it may pleaſe thee to give us ſuch an awe of thy juſtice, that we may fear to provoke it, not expecting thou ſhouldſt repent of thy judgments, when we do not of our ſins, nor fancying that any milder vengeance attends our final obſtinacy than unquenchable fire.

*We beſeech thee*, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to grant us ſuch a ſenſe of thy mercy, that we may never ſay there is no hope, or excuſe our incorrigibleneſs by our deſperation, but that the goodneſs of God may lead us to repentance, yet let us never ſo preſume on it, as to ſin that Grace may abound.

*We beſeech thee*, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to enable us with all due regard to obſerve, and humility to adore, the diſpenſations of thy Providence, not pretending to fathom thy ſecret intendments, but endeavouring ſo to comply with all ſignal diſcoveries of thy purpoſes towards us, that what thou deſigneſt for our wealth, may not be to us an occaſion of falling. *We beſeech thee*, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee, that from every event, whether National or Perſonal, we may ſtill infer the obligation and neceſſity of turning from our ſins, that gratitude for paſt mercies may allure us to good, and fear of impending Judgments may drive us from evil.

*We beſeech thee*, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to inſpire the univerſal Church with the Spirit of Truth, Unity and Concord, that there may be no diviſions among us; but that we may be perfectly joyn'd together, in the ſame mind, and in the ſame Judgment.

*We beſeech thee*, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee, whereinſoever any are contrary minded, to reveal thy truth to them; and in the interim ſo to allay thoſe heats our differences have caus'd, that amidſt the diverſities of Judgment, we may keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace.

*We beſeech thee*, &c.

That it it may pleaſe thee to deliver us from all the unhappy effects of our contentions, and to purge us from all the criminous cauſes of them, and ſo to heal our breaches, that *Jeruſalem* may again become a City at unity in it ſelf.

*We beſeech thee*, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to grant that we no longer dote about queſtions, and ſtrifes of words whereof cometh Envy, Railing, evil Surmiſes; but ſo buſie our ſelves in practick duties, that we may not fear when our Lord comes to be found ſo doing.

*We beſeech thee*, &c.

Son of God we beſeech thee to hear us.

O Lamb of God that tak'ſt away the ſins of the world;
*Grant us thy Peace.*

O Lamb of God that tak'ſt away the ſins of the world;
*Have mercy upon us.*

O Chriſt hear us.

*Lord have mercy upon us.*
*Chriſt have mercy upon us.*
*Lord have mercy upon us.*

OUR *Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy Name*, &c.

O Lord deal not with us after our Sins.
*Neither reward us after our Iniquities.*

ALmighty God, who ſheweſt to them that be in Error the light of thy truth, to the intent that they may return to the way of righteouſneſs: Grant unto all them that be admitted to the fellowſhip of Chriſt's Religion, that they may eſchew thoſe things which be contrary to their profeſſion, and follow all ſuch things as are agreable to the ſame, through *Jeſus* Chriſt our Lord.

O Merci-

O Merciful Saviour, who ſo lovedſt thy Church, as to give thy ſelf for her, look again on her with thy compaſſionate eyes, who now needs a ſecond redemption, even a reſcue from her ſelf, from the unnatural iſſue of her own bowels. Lord thou ſeeſt the miſerable ſtate to which ſhe is reduced, by our wild contentions, that ſhe has at once loſt her purity, and her peace, and is become an *Aceldama*, a field of bloud. Lord where is thy pity and the ſounding of thy bowels towards her, are they reſtrained? O remember thy old loving kindneſs, the love of thy eſpouſals, and as thou wert once a Lamb to expiate her guilts, ſo be thou now a Lion to vindicate her wrongs; ſtrike a dread into the hearts of all, who have contributed to her ruine, and make them know that whoſo touches her, toucheth the apple of thine Eye. O let not her ſtill ſink under the oppreſſion of our ſordid deſigns, and irregular appetites, nor be devour'd by thoſe who pretend to guard her. Give her Paſtors after thine own heart; let her Prieſts be cloath'd with righteouſneſs, and waſh their hands in innocence before they compaſs thine Altar. O let not any vain ambition for themſelves, make them expoſe and proſtitute the honour of their God: no affectation of that knowledge which puffeth up, divert them from that Charity which only edifieth: Grant that the intereſt of Religion may ſtill be uppermoſt in their hearts, and never veil to Secular ends, nor the pretence of truth cloak any exorbitant paſſion. Nay, O Lord, refine even their zeal, and make it ſerve to kindle, not conſume their Charity: and to inſpirit them with ſuch an unwearied induſtry, that they may always abound in the work of the Lord, diligently take heed to thoſe flocks, over whom the Holy Ghoſt has made them overſeers, never turning aſide to vain jangling, or ſtriving about words to no profit. And to all who are under their charge, give meekneſs to ſubmit to thoſe who by thy appointment watch their Souls; ſuppreſs all prejudices and faction, and let none be puffed up for one againſt another, but grant that by a due atten-

dance

dance on their callings, both as men and Chriſtians they may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godlineſs and honeſty. And, Lord, let both Prieſt and People ſo follow after the things that make for peace, that we may adorn the doctrine of our God and Saviour, take off the ſcandal our diviſions have given to thoſe that are without, and again evidence our relation to the Prince of Peace: and O that our ways were made thus direct; but alas, how little diſpoſition have we towards it? This change muſt be only the work of that mighty power, which is able to ſubdue all things to it ſelf: and yet, O Lord, with what face can we beg of thee to force us to that happineſs, which we ſtill reſolve to reſiſt? What can we then ſay unto thee, O thou preſerver, thou redeemer of men, who have put our ſelves beyond all the ordinary methods of thy grace? We can only lay our ſelves at thy feet; diſplay our miſery, and leave thee to conſider thine own compaſſion: O let that move thee to do for us whatever our wretched eſtate is in need of; O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, conſider and do it, if not for ours, yet for thy Names ſake: thou art *Jeſus* a Saviour, ſave thy people from their ſin and let us not ſlide back by a perpetual backſliding; thou art the head of the Church. O abandon not thy body, careſt thou not that ſhe periſh? Turn thee again, O Lord, renew her days as of old, ſanctifie and cleanſe her, that thou mayeſt again preſent her to thy ſelf a glorious Church, not having ſpot or wrinkle, and if ſhe muſt ſtill be militant, let it no longer be within her ſelf, but againſt ſpiritual wickedneſſes, the ruler of the darkneſs of this world; till at laſt thou utterly beat down Satan under her feet, and tranſlate her from this ſtate of warfare, to that of triumph, and bliſs in the Kingdom of thy Father; which thou O bleſſed *Jeſus* haſt purchaſed with thy Blood, and ſealed by thy Spirit. To which bleſſed Trinity be aſcrib'd all praiſe, honour, and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

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O MOST gracious Lord, who out of thy boundleſs compaſſion to thy creatures, art never wanting in any means that may draw them to thy ſelf, we the unworthieſt of them deſire to give glory to thee, in a hearty acknowledgment that thou haſt in a moſt eminent and peculiar manner abounded to us of this Nation, afforded us all the methods that might either force or allure us to obedience. Lord, thou wert pleaſed to keep us many years under thy chaſtening hand, thou broughteſt us into the ſnare and laydſt trouble upon our loyns, and didſt at once upbraid and puniſh our voluntary ſlaveries to our own luſts, by giving us up a prey to thoſe of others: and when thoſe judgments which ſhould have melted, ſerv'd but to harden us; when we ſeemed emulous to have our ſins out-vye thy Plagues, as they had before thy mercies, what could we then expect, but to find a judgment worthy of God? Such an irreverſible ruine, as might render us an hiſſing and aſtoniſhment to the whole Earth? But when we were thus ripen'd for thy greateſt ſeverity, then didſt thou, O Lord, prevent us with the bleſſings of thy goodneſs, miraculouſly interpoſe for our reſcue, and by ſuch undiſcernable ways return the captivity of our Sion, that we were deliver'd like them that dream. This, O Lord, was ſo ſtupendious, ſo amazing a mercy, that nothing can be more admirable, but only our prodigious ingratitude: Thou haſt ſignally atteſted thy ſelf to be a God that doſt wonders, and yet we who enjoy the benefit of them, neither conſider them as wonders, nor thee as God; but atheiſtically defie that Providence by which we ſubſiſt. Thou haſt reſtored to us our ſolemn worſhip, and we now ſay what a wearineſs is it? can ſeldom afford it our preſence, and ſeldomer our hearts. Thou haſt broken the yoke of uſurping oppreſſors, and we murmur no leſs at our lawful Governours, as if all that we deſired to reap by the exchange, were the guilt of ſpeaking evil of dignities. Thou haſt freed us from the burden of unlawful

impoſed oaths; and we daily rend thy ſacred name by voluntary impertinent ones. Thou haſt delivered our eſtates from the rapine of others, and we ſacrifice them to our own riot, and are never the more open-handed to our poor brethren for all thy munificence to us. Thou haſt reſtor'd us the liberty of our Perſons, and we proclaim licence to our luſts. Theſe are the degenerous and baſe returns we have made; thus, O thus have we requited the Lord, and by it have again forc'd thee to reſume thy ſcourge, and by a ſucceſſion of ſignal judgments atteſt thy diſpleaſure. And yet O Lord, who regardeth the power of thy wrath? Who is there that repenteth him of his ways, or ſaith, what have I done? Never any ſoil made ſo ill return to ſo much husbandry, and ſince we bring forth nothing but Briars and Thorns, we may ſurely conclude we are nigh unto curſing: and, O Lord, what can we plead to avert the Sentence, who are as far from penitence as innocence, or how can we pray againſt that vengeance, which we make it our buſineſs to pull down? nay, O Lord, ſhouldſt thou as miraculouſly prolong, as thou didſt reſtore our Peace, yet what will that avail us, if it ſerve but to ſet us at greater hoſtility with thee? Bleſſed Lord, there is but one mercy that we are capable of, and that is the melting our hearts, and if that cannot be done, but by caſting us into a yet more fiery furnace; Lord do that or any thing with us, ſo we may come out veſſels of honour meet for thy ſervice. But yet, O Lord, if thy gentler methods may have any effect, be pleas'd to continue thy long-ſuffering; and though we have no pretence to mercy, yet do thou avert thine own work, be merciful becauſe thou haſt been ſo, and ſuffer us not to deſtroy what thou haſt ſo miraculouſly preſerv'd. Finally O Lord, diſpenſe to us whatſoever thou ſeeſt moſt apt to reduce us; and that thy outward applications may be no longer in vain, enforce and enliven them by thy inward: and by the ſweet inſinuations of thy bleſſed Spirit, ſubdue our obſtinate perverſeneſs; and give us

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at laſt ſuch grace, as we may not turn into wantonneſs. O thou to whom all things are poſſible, who haſt done ſuch wonderful things for us, work a yet greater miracle in us, and of a prophane, ungrateful, licentious Nation make us an holy people unto thy ſelf, that all ranks and conditions of men, may as univerſally and induſtriouſly combine to propitiate, as they have to provoke thee: that ſo by bringing forth fruits of Repentance, we may eſcape thy wrath both temporal and eternal. Grant this for his ſake, who died to work that deliverance for us, *Jeſus* Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

*FINIS.*

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